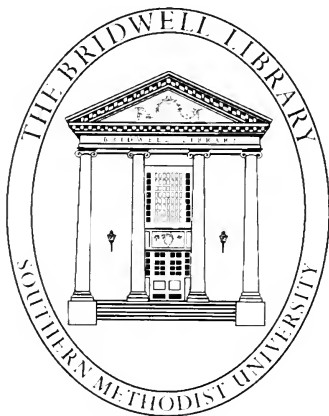




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THE STEWARD:

THE MEMBER.

BY RUFUS E. TRAVIS, ✓

A Member of the Tennessee Conference, M. E. Church, South.

“Has it never occurred to you that God demands not what you can *spare*, but what you will *miss*; that he requires a real sacrifice at your hand?”—*Rev. John Pollock.*

Second Edition.

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REMARKS OF THE AUTHOR.

IN this volume the author has written that which he would be willing to accept at the hands of a layman as a treatise on ministerial duties and privileges from his standpoint. In seeking the maintenance of the ministry, it is his desire to unite minister and layman in closer bonds.

The subject is no less delicate than important. A wise solution of it would greatly benefit the cause of the kingdom of our Lord in the earth. While the discussion is practical and, we trust, business-like, theory has not been ignored, thus giving to the subject new phases not heretofore developed by any of the literature of Methodism that we have seen. Thought, in the midst of varied reading and duties, was penned as it came up. Whatever its merit, the volume is a spontaneity. Beside a sick-bed, in watchfulness and wakefulness, the author began a sermon. It grew; and with no expectation of authorship, the body of this work was completed in a few days. While the office and duties of the steward are specially treated, the book is equally designed for Church-members; for in a true sense it might be said to be special to both. From a pure motive the author desires to help the steward and member in the special work of ministerial support. This done, his object will have been gained.

The public shall be the arbiter of the timeliness and wisdom of the contents of the volume, and in the perusal of it charity is invoked. Our prayer is that it may not wound but to heal. We shall profit by criticism made by friend or foe.

If we have been deluded, then we have studied the Scriptures in vain. We believe that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Of one thing we are assured, and that is that no one can do the work herein proposed without a love for the Church, faith in God, and a scriptural expectation of getting to heaven. Our prayer for good goes forth with the work.

RUFUS E. TRAVIS.

Nashville, Tenn., March 26, 1885.

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THE STEWARD: THE MEMBER.

CHAPTER I.

Pastor Moses's congregation—"Metes and bounds"—Brushwood—Ministers' mental resources—Preaching for money—The minister in the field—His bread—Steward and member—Rights—Liberality—Wheat, bonds, and other valuables—Man's only business—Fortunes that bring evil—A prince a beggar—Example of the death of Jesus—Ground of paying—Steward's opportunity—Ministers crucified—Outsider—The devil on a fast line—Curse of self-indulgence—Quarterage—Ratified assessments—Paying—Systematizing—The Christian's marching song—Vitriolic natures—Term steward—Qualifications of—Conditions—Steward not a money-shark—The Church's capital—Minister's comfort—Scripture—Value of life—Destroyers—Paramount duty of steward—Among the pews—Steward to begin with the year and keep right on.

PASTOR MOSES served a remarkable congregation. In camp, with no ceiled houses, the members responded with open-hearted liberality. It required a public proc-

lamation sent throughout the camp to restrain them. It was this: "Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary." Of the offerings made they had "too much." This was the infant Hebrew Church. Now that it is older, and represented by many names, how is it? We shall see.

When pacation joins hands with Christian friendship, the "metes and bounds" of a question may be agreeably determined. The higher order of intelligence in man would not, with garrulous conceit, rudely destroy the primal claims of one to the principle as laid down in Proverbs, which says, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." A juror who would not adhere to this rule might well be questioned by the court.

Such, friendly reader, is the delicacy and importance of the cause now in hand. The author's relation to stewards officially and socially has been uniformly close and brotherly—hence he writes plainly. In charity, then, apply the principles. We must remove some brush-wood and undergrowth, that we may have an open field and a clear

sky, so that all the tribe of clerical, official, and lay Methodism may be seen in full proportions. Like the minister, the steward and member must find their language, not in lugubrious, multiplying words, but in deeds and events. The Methodist minister, in the field to which God has called him, is surrounded by eternal verities, and is as happy as a good conscience, religion, and pluck can make him. Heaven and hell are the theme of his impassioned tongue, while his lessons for the people come inspired from spheres celestial. They who hear may choose for themselves. "Being born again," they are exalted to heirship, and thrones and kingdoms become their rightful heritage. With them, as Philip Doddridge says,

Gold is but dross, and gems but toys,
Should gold and gems compare;

And, redeemed from sin and selfishness, how easily can such people appreciate the fact that their ministers—with books, couch, clothing, bread, and tranquil piety relatively—are all in their hands as members of the Church of God. This friendly interview is with the stewards and members, as they

make up the great body of the Methodist Church.

Methodist ministers work hard. It is not ours to complain, but there is no other class of men who, for their labor, talents, literary and scientific acquirements, receive so small a pittance annually for their services. In some respects they differ from all other public men. In the regular pastorate two sermons a week is a current demand. Then the regular weekly prayer-meeting lecture, and funeral and special discourses, of which there are not a few, swell the list. Every one of these productions must be fresh, appropriate, mature, without repetition, delved from books fertile with thought, wrought from the wealth of nature's quarry, and crystallized and formulated at the altar of secret prayer. With due respect for all other honorable professions, there are a greater diversity of requirements and more liberal resources necessary to him who fills the ministerial calling than to any other human being holding a position of trust among men in this world. And to accuse ministers "preaching for money" is to show the of

irascible spirit bordering on to libel itself. The man who has descended so low as this, when the history of the ministry has been so well established for purity of intentions, devotion, self-sacrifice, and martyrdom, has the tongue of a viper, and is as graceless as he is satanic. More, however, of this question again.

No plan is laid by the ministry which does not embrace the public welfare. In this they are broad and philanthropic. They have a public trust in preaching the gospel to the people. This trust is sacredly kept. They have a great constituency. As Methodists the stewards and members will not object to hearing the best and worst of themselves and their ministers. There are some thousands of itinerant Methodist ministers occupying their several stations of duty preaching the word. There they must stay till God shall smite sin unto death, redeem those of all nations who will believe on him, and then at last wreath the brow of his own Son on Mount Zion with garlands of honor, while the Church militant fades into the Church triumphant.

Methodist ministers must have books—mental pabulum—as well as bread for the sustenance of the body. In his rectorial address before the students of Edinburgh, Lord Iddesleigh, deprecating the loss or failure to digest desultory reading along with collecting material for the foundation of the inductive sciences, said: “It is only

The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
With loads of learned lumber in his head.”

Many a Methodist minister, with not even a large stock of literary lumber of any kind—unlettered, and with no teacher but the Holy Ghost—has entered the itinerant ministry, and with no earthly possessions save the horse he rode and the wardrobe and library he carried complete in his saddle-bags, has risen to usefulness and distinction. Ruling spirits, linguists, learned book-makers, and bishops, have been born to this state of things. The boy who will not make the conditions of life, overcoming hinderance and adversity, ought to be defeated. But the colonial and tribal days are past. They were plain, honest days, not to be despised because they were primitive. The despoiler,

avarice, has since then renewed the battle and entered for larger possessions, preaching the miser's fatal doctrine under the guise of "economy" in the Church. And then the omnivorous maw of luxury, the expensive, empty conventional follies of society—those shams which are the hot-bed for breeding the blow-flies of the charlatan and the cockatoos—have grown a carbuncle on ideal character, and vauntingly sought to vitiate the sacred aroma of the plain Christian home. Startling as the statement may be for the times and their comparative ability, members of the Church paid quite as liberally *per capita*, it is thought, if not in money in its equivalent, during the first fifty years of organized Methodism as they have the last fifty. And more startling still is the fact, if history be true, that the ministry were supported with less complaint then than they are now. This is one of the first symptoms of a nation's retrograding toward barbarism.

Methodist ministers are leading some millions of the sacramental hosts called Methodists, and many other hearers, on to God.

Not one of these ministers has any natural or moral right to expect or claim that the Church shall make him rich in material estates, nor have Church-members the right to require labor at the hands of these ministers who are in the regular itinerancy when appointed to their respective charges, except where the field is purely missionary, till they have definitely settled the question of a comfortable support for them and laid plans for the collection of the same. But we shall see at another place the law of the Church and its regulations of this measure. Methodist ministers seldom have money or equipage except as the Church supplies it. Aside from the preaching, technically so called, and a limited orderly and transparent ecclesiastical organism, every thing in Methodism focalizes upon the steward and the member. One of the chief beauties of Methodist polity is that every one of its basic principles, from private membership to the episcopacy, consults the voluntary action of the individual, while its doctrines predicate the freedom of the human will, and stand at eternal variance with priestcraft and fatalism. Its

doctrines of a universal atonement and the witness of the Spirit consciously felt in the heart of every converted believer are fundamental. Its inherent breadth and charity, which recognize every person its brother who by the scriptural test has been inducted into the family of God, and whose experience is based upon the words, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," make it structurally simple to the unlettered, while its dictum of doctrinal statement and catholic liberalism commend it to the cultured mind. There is no place under Methodist terminology for one to be narrow in views or sympathy, to be uncharitable in action or illiberal with money, whether minister or layman, male or female.

This volume will not, of design, be analytical or textual, but cursory or topical. The warp and woof of the book, except some coloring-material, was spun by our wheel and woven in our own little loom.

Without dictation, we sincerely wish to induce the steward and member to doff their sluggish habits where there is sluggishness, and cease to starve their minister where

there is comparative starvation, and set out afoot, horseback, in wagons, buggies, calashes, carriages, or by railroad, to his home or boarding-house, or follow him from place to place in his wanderings, and seek out and relieve his wants as soon as he comes among them after Conference. And be not spasmodic and inconstant, as were the Galatians, whom Paul chided for not going on after they had "run well" for a season. Begin well, and without diminution of zeal hold out from year's end to year's end. But make no mistake: neither zeal, nor love, nor praise of the pastor is in itself a suitable substitute for bread or raiment for him and his family. The steward may best spend his creative energies of mind and heart, not in epics, but in making history. There are bushels of fruit, corn, wheat, barley, and numberless pigs, lambs, cattle, mules, horses, and piles of stocks and bonds that are being hawked about the market-place in town and country, the price of which is God's just rent, due from his creature man; but it largely goes for fun, pleasure, and luxury. The account of this wasteful prodigality is not kept down

here, but the Book-keeper above makes all the entries of debits and credits; and the sheriff of death will summon us all before the tribunal of the last judgment, and hold us to a strict settlement of our accounts. Our approval or condemnation will rest upon the question of the proper management of our affairs for the Lord. A comfortable living is nature's highest complement to man. The end of his creation, therefore, can only be met when he attains to the highest mental, moral, and religious excellence.

We know parents with large estates who have ceased to intrust their money to their children. They are reckless, extravagant, improvident, dissipated, prodigal, bestial children. But we have known strange providences to deal with those parents with the same severity with which they deal with their own children, when they had increased in worldly goods but decreased in their liberality to the Church of God. Sad are we to say it, but it is common with poor fallen man to become parsimonious and covetous with the increase of wealth. Financial reefs are possible to all; but they await the fortunes and

heirs of those people who do not deal squarely with God. Time has thickly strewn the earth with the bleached skeletons of ardent speculators and fallen syndicates. The wisest plans have been disappointed, and man's brightest worldly hopes, like a proud ship in a storm, have been dismantled and sunk beneath the commotion of angry billows.

Let not the rich man array himself against the poor, nor the poor against the rich. In religion God has always made poverty and wealth equal, and both have a history of rich ministries of blessing through his Church. Each may entail its own peculiar legacy to the race. Lazarus, with his abject poverty, is quite as celebrated and equally as much inshrined in the heart of the Christian world as is faithful Abraham with his immense wealth. It is the piety, reader, and not the property, that makes the difference in men before the Lord.

The position of the Methodist steward is a good one to honor his manhood and serve his Master. It is also a good place to backslide and learn to grumble; and grumbling

once begun with the steward, numbers will not be found wanting among the members. The steward ought to maintain high ground. Courage, grace, and prudence are among the chief elements of power in him. Malcontents, and every other sort of priggishness, may deepen the shades upon his upright soul, and the flinging of the fussy thunderbolts of their impotent wrath with the air of Joves and the strength of pigmies will but give alacrity to his steps as he marches on to the goal of success baptized with the gladdening voices of the song of ten thousand angels.

Paul holds the example of the death of Jesus Christ to enforce the principle of paying money to the cause of religion when he says: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." If, therefore, Christ had not died there had been no salvation. The argument here made by Paul is an incitant—yea, more, a reason—for Christian liberality. The example of Jesus here is illustrious. He did according

to his ability and the necessities of the case. This one lesson learned by steward and member, and faithfully put into execution, would supply every Methodist minister's home with the needed comforts of life. It puts the money question more strongly than we can in any feeble language of ours, and that too for all ages and peoples so long as the atonement shall save men from sin, which work will go on according to the divine purpose. The gift of Jesus touches the tenderest chord of man's heart. It means, in part, that heaven, the home of perfect love, was exchanged by the Son of God for earth—low, vile earth; that angelic associations were shadowed and forsaken, with no returns but the fomenting rage and companionship of man, while heaven, with its wealth of joy and throneship, was laid aside, as man folds and lays aside his garments, for that poverty whose victim said in pathetic utterance that he had not "where to lay his head." With this wonderful love of Jesus, how can mortal man withhold from paying to his Church, with its numerous and urgent demands, his fifties, hundreds, thou-

sands, and millions of dollars where he has it as a possession from him, when this same Jesus, at the supreme moment, voluntarily redeemed him soul and body from an imminent hell? How? Will the steward hear us? Will the member? Surely Cudworth wrote for the Christian when he said that “the golden beams of truth and the silken cords of love will draw men on with a sweet violence, whether they will or no.” Holy Spirit, seal this truth to the heart of every reader!

If the Methodist ministry of the country lie down to broken slumbers and weary tossings, and the nightmare of unpaid quarterage—quarterage to meet necessitous outlays for themselves and families—augment their unrest and consume their lives with feverish care, when the books of the judgment are unsealed how will the record show up for steward and member who had charge of their store-rooms and itemized comforts? If the judgment shall sit in the bounds of some one of the well-known missions, circuits, or stations whose murderous delinquencies toward its pastor has excelled in

helping him to the grave-yard and increasing the revenues of the undertaker, there would be commotion and no little consternation among the natives.

Like the blight of an Arabian simoom, one quarter of a Methodist minister's unpaid salary, be it large or small, will chain the lion of nerve force in him and bleed his heart with agony; and the stains of this blood will be a swift witness against the charge that withholds it.

Some men are entered on the roll of martyrs when they die; others are living martyrs. Of these latter some are Methodist ministers who, like Peter, have been crucified head downward by the starvation policy, indifference, and pious idleness of the "meat and bread brigade" of the army of the Lord, the spirit of whose appointment is not in consonance with a seedy wardrobe or empty larder. The moiety of some charges that are able to and could support their ministers, and under the guise of the religion of Christ pay their dimes and give their laid-by traps, have notions.

That knightly character, who stood with-

out a peer among the brethren of his Conference, Dr. A. L. P. Green, has left an impress upon Methodist ministers for tender, affectionate concern and watch-care which time cannot efface. His history in seeking to care for ministers, especially those who needed a thoughtful friend, as he studied to know men bodily as well as mentally, is as a love-song attuned to a guileless maiden's heart or a cluster of diamonds set in his crown of princely manhood. Why not the steward so in the care of his minister? And why not the member? Thank God, many are. There is no greater opportunity afforded to any one than that which is open to the steward and member of the Methodist Church for courtly bearing toward and generous dealings with their minister.

The support of the ministry is a question of moral obligation resting upon all the people. As members of the Church and as people it involves the standard of their piety and their honor as citizens. If a man must be honest before the Lord in order to obtain religion, he should be as honest about what he does afterward in the name of that relig-

ion. Religion is not a cloak to hide the sin of covetousness, or any other sin; nor is it a napkin for the Methodists to tie up and bury God's quarterly or annual rents in. It is a principle, and that principle must bear good fruit. But for an unconverted man to excuse himself from the support of the ministry and the maintenance of current Church enterprises because he is not in the Church is false logic—false in statement and false in conclusion. He is doubly responsible in this attitude. Responsible, first, for not being a Christian and in the Church; and, secondly, for refusing to pay to the Church, the right of being out of which he must first show to be of divine authority.

It takes energy and earnestness to be a steward. The facilities move men rapidly in all kinds of business. The Church should be conservative, but not slow. Already the luring goddess of pleasure has won from Christ men and women through the play-house and sottish dissipation. The devil used to walk, now he travels by lightning express and telegraph. We are no pessimist, but self-indulgence, popular and questionable

amusements, and the glittering and costly equipages of fancy and display, often consume the money of some people before the steward can reach them. Here the minister and the Church come second, but those people to grief.

Another trouble about supporting the ministry, aside from self-indulgence, is in the fact that many people never lay up any thing, either systematically or otherwise, to pay them, though they lay up money for State and county taxes. There is no law in the Methodist Church for suing a member and forcing him to pay quarterage (and quarterage does not mean a quarter of a dollar, either), for the reason that the moral sense of a Methodist is dominant, or supposed to be, which should put him in willing harmony with all he can pay to and receive from God. But the disciplinary plan will be quoted farther on. The luxuries of the home oftentimes dry up the treasury of the Lord more than the poverty of the people. The world is in the Church and the devil in the world. The Church, like Belshazzar at the feast, is sipping the intoxicating wine-cup

of pleasure, quite oblivious to the sin of its doom as written upon its walls. Ay, to hunt and find the path of duty is heaven. In the rude scrawl of these pencilings the very poignancy of its truth was discovered in the low depths of self-abasement under a stinging sense of duty; but to write them "you'll be judged," we queried. After much prayer the answer was, "Let judgment come." The Christian poet sings beautifully to the child of God as onward he marches in turmoil and pain. Hear the sweet, warbling notes:

Within this body pent,
Absent from thee I roam,
But nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

We are not writing for a people who are under passional supremacy, but under the reign of grace; and, desirous only to present helpful truths, we think we are not mistaken in the good temper and charity of those made prominent in this book. Our motive will be accepted as a right one.

Bitter and vitriolic natures may by epithet or invective gratify themselves in other

departments of life if they choose, but the Methodists, being a pious people, have no such things to disgorge, especially when grave questions of duty are the issue. They prefer plainness of speech to vapid pseudology. If the Methodist ministers are being starved out, and are locating, let us say so, and search for the cause and apply the remedy. If they are half supported, then keep nothing back. There are reasons for this. If they are being comfortably supported the reasons are cogent, and the good steward and member ought to be commended. The leading object of this volume is to try to get the people, especially the Methodist people, to pay their ministers at regular intervals—weekly, semi-monthly, monthly, or quarterly—by systematic plans, under the Discipline, a comfortable living.

We once heard Bishop McTyeire say that “an inefficient board of stewards could starve a preacher in the midst of a willing people, in a country of plenty.” The utterance made a deep impression upon the mind of the writer. This thought has often recurred to him since: Is it inefficiency in the stew-

ards or inability in the members when the minister is not supported? Can it be the former? Rightly managed it cannot, we think, be so often the latter. The steward ought to have a large heart, and the member not less so; and when the heart of each of them knows the love of God the faith of expectancy both in them and the people may be cultivated.

The term steward literally means, says Dr. Worcester, "A manager of another's affairs." When a man becomes a steward in the Methodist Church he is elevated to the position of dual relations. First, he is intrusted with the temporal affairs of the Church; secondly, he is constituted a sub lay-pastor. His duties in both relations are clearly defined in the book of Discipline; also his qualifications. As financial manager for the Church, our strictures will, in intent, be for the benefit of the steward as well as for the general good of well-disposed Church-members and the people at large.

The Methodist steward is charged with the collection, keeping, and application of moneys under certain disciplinary stipula-

tions. He is authorized by the Discipline to assess the members for the support of the ministry. Having made the assessments, he must then submit them to the members individually for their ratification; for no assessment is valid unless it be agreed to by the party assessed. And the assessment plan, remember, is strictly carried out only when each member is assessed, and not merely the heads of families, and that too according to the "ability" of each to pay. We have never yet seen the plan of the Discipline followed in this except in a modified way. Will any complain at this? Does not God lay tribute upon the soil and sun to feed man? Let him not, then, if he have a manhood equal to a heathen—for heathens always pay sacrifice to their gods, or, as Plutarch says of the Egyptians, they "offer three times every day incense and sweet odors to the sun"—let him not, we repeat, lie down like the old cynic Diogenes in his little tub of selfishness, and snarl and snap because the shadow of some one's claim happens to fall on him.

Having made the assessments, and ad-

justed by personal interview their ratification, the steward becomes morally responsible to the Quarterly Conference, by whose voice he was elected, to collect quarterly, at least, of the assessments in his hands, and pay over the same as the Discipline directs.

The law of the Church wisely provides that the preacher in charge shall have the right of nomination of such man or men as he in his godly judgment may deem suitable for the office of steward, and upon such nomination he or they may then be elected by a majority of the votes of the conference. The Discipline is explicit on the question of the qualifications of the men who are to fill this office. It says: "Let the stewards be men of solid piety, who both know and love the Methodist doctrine and discipline, and of good natural and acquired abilities to transact the temporal business of the Church."

By the tokens of a sound conversion and a diligent use of the means of grace the steward might, in a general way, be worthy to be esteemed a man of solid piety. The value of this may be seen by taking the opposite character. The unconverted man, the man

who has no knowledge of and love for Methodist doctrine and discipline, does not possess, in a Methodist sense, those convictions and qualifications which entitle him to the assumption of so grave responsibilities. If from no other cause, in the trials of the work, he may "fall away." There must be a living Christ in a living soul and a willingness to endure hardship for Christ. Spirituality, with its flame of holy fire and zeal in the conscious possession of the Holy Ghost, is not more essential to the minister than are buoyant hope and tireless perseverance to the success of the steward. Barnabas well answers to the character of a Methodist steward. The Book says of him that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

To love the Methodist doctrine and discipline one need not be gifted or learned. When the Holy Ghost legislated Methodism out of the counsels of the Holy Scriptures he did it for the peasant as well as the king, for the plain laborer as well as the mind of classic mold; and when the Holy Ghost put forth Mr. Wesley to give the world a polity

and doctrine, by the prowess of his great mind he achieved the work in singular harmony with the plane of the common mind. All the wiser of the writers and fathers have patterned after him. As to Methodist doctrine and polity they are less complex than most of those of other home and foreign Churches.

Whenever the steward magnifies his office then gaunt and hollow-eyed Methodism no longer drags its slow length along like a starveling or mendicant, but it stands with a robust, commanding presence to bless the country; and claiming the "world" as its "parish," America joins hands with Europe, while the nations beyond swell the voice of triumph.

The duties of the stewardship need not encroach upon the sacred relations a man holds to his secular affairs in which the comfort of his own family is involved. He may be in current daily labors for himself; but while he makes, buys, and sells he should not permit those things to interfere with the least duty of his office. To know he loves God and his Church is not enough for the

good steward. He loves his minister, too, and he supports him. Then, as the tide ebbs and flows, he hears the soft whisper of peace in his soul as if it were the breath of God coming to him over the waves of the sea of life, saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant;" for the steward is the angel of relief to bear bread to the Methodist parsonage.

He, by virtue of his office, has conferred upon him a prominence among his neighbors and fellow-countrymen which he would not otherwise enjoy. He is honored as a representative of the Church, and fills a place in its councils, which, from its conditions, though preëminent, is forbidden the itinerant minister, whose faithful and wise ministry he looks to for comfort, encouragement, and guidance. These relations are divine. Their integrity and fervor have challenged the admiration of the generations of Methodism in the past, while God has spoken through them to the world of brotherly-kindness, concord, and love.

Temperaments are as unlike as faces. Aside from physiological reasons each man

is different from every other man. This may be a fault, or it may be a virtue. A man who has n't some peculiarity in his composition, though, was not born even for an ordinary purpose, and it would be a safe policy to never disturb him in the cradle of sycophancy, where soothing lullabies shall ever keep him in sweet remembrance of his aimless and deedless existence.

Methodism is an educator. It expects the steward to "know the Methodist doctrine and discipline," and when he knows them to "love" them. The doctrines are contained in the Twenty-five Articles of Faith in the Discipline, and may be read in one hour. Then there are the General Rules on pages following the Articles, which, with prayerful reading, give the tools to work the doctrine into the intellectual, moral, and religious faculties of mind and soul. If a minister has no doctrine he should not degrade the pulpit by remaining in it, and that doctrine, too, in accordance with the creed and standard authors of the Church to which he belongs. If a man be a steward, and have not sound doctrine in him in a general way,

or if he have bad doctrine, or no doctrine at all, he ought carefully to lay a foundation in this matter for the sake of the honorable position to which the Church has called him. For such a man to retain this important office without a settled faith in general principles in harmony with Methodism might be the means, from this point of commanding influence, of sowing hurtful dissensions; or, like an overgrown child without a bone in his body, hinder rather than help the movements of the Lord's cause. Doctrines are to the Christian what the osseous element is to man's body—they hold the mortal and immortal natures upright. A symmetrical life and complete faith cannot exist without them.

When a member of the Church desires, or rather is called of God, to leave the ranks of the laity for the more responsible work of the ministry, he must subscribe to the Twenty-five Articles of Faith seriatim, without mental reservation; but if an applicant desires membership in the Church of God only, then he may be received upon the baptismal vows laid down for those of riper years, as

in this he promises to “walk in the commandments of God all the days of his life,” subscribes the Apostles’ Creed, and ratifies the baptismal vows by assuming the vows of recognition. The Apostles’ Creed is the creed of Christendom—is held in common, we mean, by nearly all evangelical Churches—and it so epitomizes the ground principles of religion as to be ample to a correct and saving faith, without touching the boundary lines of a distinctive, scholastic theology. But while one may join the Methodist Church with this subscription to a general creed such as the Apostles’—as this is the custom for every one to do who does join—yet, when doctrines are held by any one contrary to the Twenty-five Articles of Faith, the person so joining who holds these views is expected to do so in peace to himself.

To be a man of “good natural and acquired abilities” does not mean that the man selected to the office of steward has grown rich, nor that poverty is in itself a recommendation or objection; nor does it mean that worldly shrewdness, or possessing a faculty for driving a bargain, is a qualification for

so delicate and exalted a field of labor. It means that the man selected for the stewardship shall have good common sense and business habits, which will adjust him to the work of the Church. The energy of the steward is the Church's investment of capital for a living for its ministers; and yet the financial skill of a Rothschild or the fabled wealth of a Cræsus, unconsecrated, would be questionable in the Church of God.

The steward's qualifications have been defined, and he is expected to do his work faithfully, and for the work's sake. He must rise above selfishness, look to the whole work, and broaden with the conditions surrounding him. A conscience quickened by the Holy Ghost, fashioning and molding him for the aggressive work and demands of his Lord's kingdom and the needs of his pastor, should make him considerate, attentive, industrious, persevering, and powerful in the Church of God.

He has a difficult work, and the comfort of his pastor and family depends upon his doing that work timely and well. With a sunny face the minister can go before his

people with the principle and plea of the Holy Scriptures, affectionately instructing them in the honest Pauline style of the pleasing duty of supporting the gospel, saying: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we should reap your carnal things?" It is also a divine statute that "even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Now, prayerfully examine those two texts. They lie at the foundation of this question; and may the Holy Ghost sink down and burn his way to the profoundest depths of your conscience, reader, for therein is blessing and life.

In the first text it is laid down as a principle that for a minister to receive "carnal things"—say raiment, food, and money, a substantial living—from the people whom he serves is, when held in contrast with what he gives out to them in "spiritual things," not really great nor equal, either in quality, quantity, measure, or worth. And Paul clearly had before his mind, when he uttered the language quoted, the same subterfuges and perversities which some men of to-day

have who, in their Shylockian covetousness, belong to an order of pipers and pilgarlics to whom conscience is a stranger and the ministry, religion, and the support of the gospel fit only to be sported at and gibed in the spirit of full-fledged lunacy.

But the other text enjoins, as an unvarying ordinance of Heaven, that the minister who plies his vocation as a true and faithful servant of the cross has not even a human right to lay plans for his support outside the people whom he serves. It may be said that there are some charges too poor to support a pastor. The answer is at hand: The minister may, in such case, provide for emergencies, as Paul did when with his own hands he made tents while serving a feeble mission, with not less of the divine favor upon him and his labors. He has estimated the purpose and value of life. Whether he be in want or plenty, whether doing his work with only a neighborhood reputation or is known to fame, and minister where eager thousands hang upon his burning lips, the constitution of God and the way of life equally unfold to a persistent study and the grasp of his heroic

faith; and while he reasons like a true philosopher bent on saving the souls of men from sin and death, he wonders with something more than human astonishment why men, sagacious, skilled, and erudite, should wed their destiny to this world alone. Its ephemeral honors fade as do the flowers—its inanities emptiness itself—while its accretions of wealth are as treacherous as the ever-changing color of the chameleon. Edward Young discloses the final scene to man as he passes through perturbation of mind to position and wealth when he says:

Why all this toil for triumphs of an hour?

What though we wade in wealth or soar in fame,

Earth's highest station ends in "Here he lies,"

And "Dust to dust" concludes her noblest song.

The providence of our Father—general and special—is but the administration of the affairs of the natural and divine governments; for there is but one administration, and that is employed to bring man—in heart and action, in life and estate—back into harmony with God. This is the purpose of God and the end of religion.

The Egyptian caterpillar of the seventy-

eighth Psalm, the locust, the palmer-worm, and the canker-worm of the first chapter of Joel, devoured the substance of the people. They were as much agents of the Lord in their respective spheres as were Aaron the gifted declaimer, Moses the stammering law-giver, Apollos the eloquent and Paul the master ministers of the cross.

It will be seen that we believe the word of God to be a powerful instrument in the hands of the steward for doing his work. If he will lean upon God for every thing, and then go to work like he expected to do it all by himself, he cannot fail. To such a worker there are promises stronger than the mighty arms of a Hercules, and the gaudy vestments of light borne upon the bosom of a cloudless summer morning but faintly outline the final glory of the destiny of a soul thus reposing its trust in God. "Without me ye can do nothing," says our Lord. This realized, the scale is in the ascendant. "I can do all things," declares Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me;" and that morceau of divine sweetness and consolation appended by our Lord to the great commis-

sion, so replete with the infinite fullness, was left for all men: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

The duties of the steward are varied and numerous, the principal one of which, however, is that of the support of the ministry. This we especially treat as we proceed. The steward's duties being all objective, for he does not serve himself except as he serves his Lord, he has therefore ample opportunity to cultivate benevolent impulses and chastened patriotic sentiment. He, by reason of his relation and work, must educate the people when they are out of the pews, as the minister does from the pulpit when they are in the pews. When the steward is right, systematic in plans, industrious, persevering, and responsive to the needful calls of the gospel, an example to the flock, Christianly liberal, strong, and plucky, he will succeed and have a following.

That rare compound of genius and heroism, Oliver Cromwell, with the pen of a true philosopher, has recorded a principle which, if followed, would issue in the highest possible forms of success in the business of the

Church and in the aims and purposes in the order of secular life—a principle instinct with the vital elements of success in any and every thing worthy the name. He says: “Not only strike while the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking.”

A moderately good man, conscientious, but with a delicate or sickly piety, might be helped by showing him what might have been done by reciting that which has not been done; or to draw out the lines of coloring more strikingly and throw stronger light upon man's path of duty, we might, in our foibles and failings, all look upon ourselves less complacently than we do. With reference to life and its known failures and paltry outcomes in the face of the open Bible, as men and as Christians we might indeed conclude, with the German philosopher Goethe, that “where there is much light the shade is deepest.”

There is no conflict between the private business of the steward and his official duties—no radical antagonism. With the converted man they may harmonize well, and when the many duties of his office—duties

fraught with delicacy and trial in the minds even of his brethren—are upon him, though he may be timid and feel poorly qualified for if not unequal to the task, yet the remembrance of duty, the material reasonable wants of his pastor, and the love of his Master's cause, brace him in his struggles, and make his conscience, in the fulfillment of every duty, great and small, a little heaven on earth.

He, by committee or otherwise, has an imperative duty in helping his brother stewards make, early and promptly in the Conference-year, the disciplinary assessments on the members. He can then list the membership in equal numbers, or as nearly so as may be, with amounts to be paid opposite, and then let each member of the board take his portion, see the members in person, and have them ratify the assessments made or change and ratify according to their "willingness" to pay. The two disciplinary words "ability" and "willingness" do not always run on parallel lines among the Methodists. A few lessons of unadulterated Genevan "perseverance" would be helpful, even in the bor-

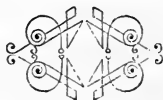
ders of Arminianism. But the steward, by mutual understanding, like a brother among brethren, may proceed to collect quarterly or otherwise the amount agreed upon, and so work out the matter decently and in order as the Lord's business requires.

With the system indicated it would be natural to suppose that no board of stewards could accomplish a work so easily and successfully without being formally organized, with a chairman, secretary, and treasurer, and to attend, when called upon, the "official meetings," barring providential hinderances only.

The steward cannot get too close to his minister in sympathy, wholesome advice, and fervent prayer. He is one of the most important officers in the Church. By no other hand is his minister's larder kept supplied, and the treasury of the Lord is filled by the happy result of his labors or emptied by their neglect. His routine of official duties is a unique line of obligations, ample in scope for the exercise of the rarest Christian graces. Patience in well-doing is a virtue in the steward, and if the results reached in

his work are not satisfactory he should examine himself, study his people more closely, mend his ways, and personally remind those to whom he looks for the salary that the price of the minister's labor is the worth of souls.

The steward's energies bring bread to the parsonage and supply the inmates thereof with many needed blessings, while he in return reaps larger blessings than he gave. Such is the returning strength of the hand that cradles love for execution.



CHAPTER II.

Duties of the steward—To know the condition of his minister's larder—Lack of support of minister spiritual and intellectual loss to the Church—Salary to be fixed—Each quarter pay its dues—Let not five hundred members ask credit of their minister another quarter by not paying him—The steward to do things which religion cannot—Legal starvation—Nothing done well without system—The voluntary assessment plan the best known to the world—Hunger holds carnival—Death in the way—The miser—Paying the Lord and the grocer—Moving the minister to his new charge—The tongue—Waste—What the women could do.

THE steward may here see some of his duties summarized from the Discipline. It says: "It shall be the duty of the stewards to make estimates of expenses and provision for the support of the gospel; to take an exact account of all the money or other provision collected for the support of the ministry; to make an accurate return of every expenditure of money, whether for the support of the ministry or the relief of the sick or poor; to seek the needy and dis-

tressed in order to relieve and comfort them; to inform the preacher of any sick or disorderly persons; to tell the preachers what they think wrong in them; to attend the official meetings and quarterly meetings; to give advice, if asked, in planning the circuit; to attend committees for the application of money to churches; to give counsel in matters of arbitration; to provide elements for the Lord's Supper; to appoint some one, whenever necessary, to receive contributions for the support of the ministry and other purposes, and to obtain from each collector thus appointed the money received by him that it may be reported to the quarterly conference; to take up collections quarterly in every congregation, if it be necessary, and to write circular letters to the societies to be more liberal, if need be, as also to let them know, when occasion requires, the financial state of the Church as reported to the quarterly conference." Again: "The stewards of each circuit and station shall be a standing committee (where there is no parsonage) to provide houses for the families of married preachers or to assist the preach-

ers to obtain houses for themselves when they are authorized to labor among them."

Some one may say, "That sounds familiar." Yes, it is the old law of the Discipline which you have doubtless read. That may be true; but Seneca, with great wisdom of words, says: "A thing is never too often repeated which is never sufficiently learned." And a greater than Seneca says: "And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Are all the Methodist pastors supported to the extent of the ability of your people, Brother Steward? Has your pastor a house to live in? Is it a parsonage or a hired house? and did you help to provide him with it? When did you look after his larder? From what you and the brethren have done, was his breakfast this morning as good as yours, think you? You are not impertinent for wanting to know these things. The Church made you a steward expressly for this purpose. We speak out of an alarming fear to all, for what are our boasted intelligence, Bible instructions, Christian citizen-

ship, and Church helps but increased responsibilities to God and man?

It is a problem worthy of thoughtful solution to know how much of energy, learning, and spirituality has been lost to our Lord in the Methodist Church during the hundred years just passed by those of its ministers who have endured inordinate and depleting anxieties for the common necessities of life—of bread and raiment. Our heart has been made sad more than once by seeing the honest patch in the pulpit and rustling silk in the pew with a justly due and unpaid quarterage.

The minister's support should never fall below that of the average liver. If so he would be driven to infract the divine order; and instead of serving the people with an undivided mind, he must, in part, be left to serve tables. In a land of plenty this would be a calamity especially, and a shame to the people over which the angels might weep. Bishop Hargrove says: "It takes less money to make a Methodist preacher rich in the public estimation than anybody else." We have known the Methodist public mind to

verify the good Bishop's statement more than once, and claim the "gospel of charity" at the hands of their minister because he was unfortunate to have a few acres of glades and gullies and a town-lot or two for other people's predatory cattle to browse upon. Few Methodist ministers lay up money, but many of them—nearly all of them, we will say—lay up nothing, and pay back to the people what they receive from them, and possible extra earnings besides.

It has been the prayerful daily study of the writer since he united with the Church to try to interpret and properly understand the will of God and the usages and polity of the Methodist Church, and he says it with a deep sense of obligation to its members for gentle deeds, sympathy, and love bestowed upon him that he has and always has had unshaken faith in the people called Methodists.

In a few instances only have we known the steward or stewards to ignore the law of the Church and fail to estimate the salary of the minister sent to serve them. Such neglect is culpable, if not revolutionary.

The same steward will agree upon definite wages for his monthly or yearly laborer on his farm, thus placing a higher value on his own than upon his Lord's workman, and leaving him who ministers in "holy things" in painful incertitude for the entire year. While every man's work should be done with dispatch in its season, the writer has yet to learn that there is any warrant in the word of God for putting planting, sowing, reaping, shop, trade, merchandise, the call of patients, banking exactions, chair of languages, the studio, or any thing else, in the way of the time of God's appointed work.

The law is plain, and calls for the early action of the steward at the opening of the Conference-year. The Discipline reads: "The salary and traveling expenses of preachers on circuits and stations shall be estimated by their respective boards of stewards, after consultation with the preacher in charge." Such is the law, and no one but the steward can meet its terms. Upon his action depends the salary to be estimated and the salary to be collected. The steward's own child is not more dependent upon his efforts as a father for subsistence than

is his minister dependent upon him for his subsistence. He stands nearest the minister, and by well-defined official relations he should know that his minister has ample supplies for his table, and warm and cheer the hearts of the hearth-circle with his presence, with fuel and friendship. Not only is the steward's Christian character involved in the faithful performance of his work, but also his fidelity to his minister and the Church, as well as his fealty to the divine government. The faults of the minister may not be greater than those of his steward. To bear and forbear is a virtue. Even a good steward is not impeccable. Angelic he is, though the old Adam has yet many chances at the clay. He is a man. In this his minister can sympathize with him. Each must labor for the other. And still there is an individuality in the work of each of which we are impressively reminded by the familiar words of Sallust, when he says that "every man is the architect of his own fortune."

We should not live too much in the past or future. The living present is better. But

when the next centennial shall come it would be a record worthy the prompt and lion-hearted heroes of Methodism if it shall appear that no steward had failed to make an estimate for the comfortable support of his minister, and collected the sum apportioned to each quarter. In the Methodist economy no member is without a pastor, and no itinerant minister without an appointed charge. And we believe unwaveringly that if each steward, after having apportioned by assessment the pastor's salary among the members, would be vigilant and industrious, every quarter would, as it should do, meet its own accounts; and thus, as a resultant, educate the people in the Church's law, which is the only proper standard of paying. By so doing, it would unfetter the missionary collections, both home and foreign, enhance the other three Conference collections—namely, bishops', widows' and orphans', and worn-out preachers' fund, and Church extension—and so keep the members in good heart locally to improve and build church-houses and parsonages. Surely the pastoral charges—as they have a numerical strength ranging

from some fifty to eight hundred members—surely, we say, it would be less self-denial for those fifty, or one hundred, or two hundred, or five hundred members to share each his *pro rata* of the pastor's salary, and pay it quarterly, than for one man—the pastor—to have to ask further indulgence of his grocer, that he might credit his members another quarter. Any one can see, as one-fourth of the salary is due at each quarterly meeting, the difference between one hundred members paying up the quarter on the one hand and the pastor's humiliation, self-sacrifice, and mental agony on the other in having to bear one hundred times more than each member bears singly by their not paying him. This is a sad spectacle, and we feel more like weeping than complaining; but we have been made sad when we have seen the quarter behind with self-sacrificing, worn-down ministers of our Lord. Sometimes we have seen it so with aged Methodist ministers, who had bravely spent their substance and nerve force in the thickest of the fight, and then again with modest, timid young men, whose unhidden blush lay upon cheeks

which spoke of feverish care, with a heart pressed so low that even religion refused to relieve, because it was the work of the steward. We presume that no one would defend himself against the charge that to not estimate the minister's salary at all is the work of a barbarian and not a Christian. A steward, a board of stewards, and no salary fixed!

When Mark Twain performed that serio-comic act of shedding mock tears over the grave of his ancestor Adam, if it had been the burying-place of the lost coffer of the hoarded gold and silver of the steward who had failed to fix his minister's salary or assist in its collection when a bare, honest living was involved, he might have been joined in the drama by other tearless mourners in "the cloth" quite as conspicuous as himself.

To think of a guardian who would let his ward live in penury or starve, or a father who is too improvident to provide for or so unnatural as to not own his child, is painful indeed. The thought leads not to an inviting field. But the steward who does not estimate nor collect the salary under the above or a similar law, we calmly aver, is inflicting

upon his minister legal starvation, and perpetrating an act the criminality of which does not accord with his professions of piety before the world. To the steward as well as the minister do the jeweled words of Dr. O. P. Fitzgerald apply with force when he says: "The religious prosperity of your charge depends largely upon the manner in which you take up the collections. Religious benefit follows only what is done in a religious way."

The steward of the Church into whose heart our Lord has burned his love enjoys a fellow-feeling with his minister, and the reciprocity of a faith which draws them near each other and is the sublime culmination of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of hallowed peace.

Nothing can be done well without system; and especially is this true with regard to the work of the steward. For a Methodist steward to be unmethodical is waywardness; but in the strictest methodizing there is a flexibility which admonishes him that while he attempts to avoid Scylla he should not run on Charybdis.

We have taken time and employed much research in the study of the plans, usages, and financial systems of the various Churches in the United States and Europe, and we have become satisfied that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, has the best, in the "voluntary assessment plan," known to the Christian world. Even the Romish Church, with its hordes of devotees, the gift of whose pence is supposed to enhance saintship, has no law comparable to that of the Methodist Church. Methodism has given to money its place, valuing it as it looks to common needs, such as benevolent, charitable, and beneficent ends. The Romish Church, while it uses money for many good and charitable purposes, yet perverts its natural and proper moral functions and influence. Among other things, it sends forth among the nations of the earth its Jesuitical minions, whose system of pyrotic propagandism seeks, through artful plans and under organized official patronage, to wed Church and State. It makes the Pope the head of the Church and the source of temporal power, and puts the creature man in the place of God. Method-

ism knows no such folly. Its mission is to win souls to Christ, and it is so jealous of its name and character that it keeps itself and ministers out of the mire of politics and turns the State over to statesmen. The steward, knowing that a Methodist minister has but one work and that kept up solely by his diligent efforts, has ample opportunity to be mindful of the times and seasons.

For the steward to put off collecting his minister's salary till the close of the year is not unlike what that class of Christians do who live mostly in the Sahara Desert of spiritual life, and annually, about "laying-by and fodder-pulling time," take on pious gesticulations, and open their little cups for a rill of transient enjoyment. Beset with the canker of want, the minister cannot express the full force of his power of preaching, of mind and heart upon his hearers, and temptation and possible hunger hold high carnival over his intellections. The steward ought not to wait to hear his minister complain. This he may not do, but pent-up sorrow may be carried till the human heart, by a law of nature, yields to death. Be not miserly, but

be generous and royal, and steward and member can readily banish in a speedy manner any sorrow about a living which may come to the minister's heart. The Nemesis of want always follows in the path of the minister where the steward has not done his duty. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," says the word of God. If so, does the steward or member wait alternately to see how much the other will pay? One need not pay just to keep up his respectability. There is a more economical method of doing it than this. With such a spirit, his reward is just as great without as with the paying. It is all lost to him, any way. But for one member to say to another that he is "paying too much" to the Church of God just to shield his own covetousness is transcendently iniquitous. Satan is nowhere in history charged with having so little piety. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him," is the rule of God's word for paying weekly to his Church.

Personal obligations in other matters have kept good men from paying to the cause of

religion. The piece of land must be paid for, and the school-master, the grocer, milliner, and tailor must be settled with. So they should. But how about the Lord? This calls to mind a good story told the author by a very dear friend. When a certain man, who had refused to pay his quarterage, was asked if he believed in paying the minister and regarded the claim as just, he answered in the affirmative. "But," said he, "I owe other debts, and those fellows are pressing me, but the Lord is not." The clutterers who boastfully pay nothing and carp about the minister's salary are they of whom God collects large rents every few years by sending his tax-collectors of blight, drought, and wintry winds, freezing out wheat-fields and the like.

The building and repairing of churches and parsonages make heavy demands upon the people, sometimes to embarrassment. The official boards and the Church should guard the equities at this point. Unless there be a mutual agreement between them and the minister, they should not arbitrarily razee his salary down because they have build-

ing or repairing contracts on hand. With the Methodists the pastor's salary, having priority, cannot be vitiated. Few ministers could bear the strain of having charged to their salary the building and carpeting of churches. We think that grace and reason will regulate a matter like this, and solve it satisfactorily to the parties involved. But we proceed with another phase of this subject, and possibly we shall touch on sacred soil.

When his Conference is over the minister may have to move farther or nearer, as the case may be. Under the Methodist economy he is appointed for only one year at a time. The minister is then as liable to move to a new charge as he is to stay at the old one. He is supposed to have done a full year's work, and the stewards are supposed to have settled with him accordingly. So highly are the moral honor and financial integrity of the Methodist steward and member regarded in their relations to their pastor in settling with him in full by the close of the year that the Discipline, defining the prerogatives and duties of the official board having the legal

control of questions like this—namely, the Joint Board of Finance—says that “in no case shall they allow any preacher to have a claim on the Church he has served, as of debt, after his pastoral connection has ceased.” And we might add that the high honor of Methodists should keep down any occasion for such action. So the close of the Conference-year settles, under the law, all claims with the minister in the charge he has served; but the law—even inexorable old Lex himself—accredits with preëminent honor the members of a pastoral charge, supposing that they are incapable of letting their pastor go to a new field or enter upon another year without their having paid all accounts due him and the presiding elder. Reader, this point is worthy of your attention, and it might help you to stop here and pray. God loves the man who makes a habit of consulting him in prayer concerning all the affairs of this life.

We would not be misunderstood just here, and will not by broad-minded, earnest Christians, though the little piddlers in the Church may find something to carve with their jack-

knife piety by the saying; but we most heartily believe that a large measure of our worship, both in secret and in the public congregation, will remain unfruitful and defective before the Lord until our dollars and cents are made as willing agents for the promotion of his glorious kingdom by our own volition as our hands are free to provide for our households. And shall the treasury of the Church ever be too empty to pay the poor pastor who is so terribly harassed about how to feed his precious wife and little ones? If we thwart the plans of the Church and ignore the appointments of grace here, our sins, we may be sure, will overtake us hereafter. Sin, in itself, may be forgiven, but the effects of sin are not susceptible of destruction, and are therefore eternal. O sin, sin, sin! thy consequences are the eternities of God. Ah! the sin of those Church-members who get away from their minister's salary!

A consecrated minister of Jesus Christ will bear personal criticism and profit thereby. He has not less than the sapience of a true philosopher, and he will not truckle before

the tongue of the slanderer; and when duty is before him praise and dispraise are equal. All history condemns the imbruted inquisitor, old Jeffreys, for packing his cellar full of Christians like packing sardines in a box. But his crime was mitigated in that he killed only, when compared to those scandal-mongers who keep the name of a man or woman on the gridiron of their tongue of hellish malice and detraction. Thus, the man who lives in the slums of thought, the reproacher and detractor of his neighbor, like the carrion-crow, bewails the dead sheep and then eats it.

The Christian is the true gentleman, find him where you may; and here is a definition of such a man in rhythmic verse, the author of which is said to be Gouverneur Morris. He penned the gentleman thus:

'T is he whose every thought and deed
By rule of virtue moves;
Whose generous tongue disdains to speak
The thing his heart disproves;
Who never did a slander forge
His neighbor's fame to wound,
Nor hearken to a false report
By malice whispered round;

Who vice, in all its pomp and power,
Can treat with just neglect,
And piety, though clothed in rags,
Religiously respect;
Who to his plighted word and trust
Has ever firmly stood,
And, though he promised to his loss,
He makes his promise good;
Whose soul in usury disdains
His treasure to employ;
Whom no rewards can ever bribe
The guiltless to destroy.

Such a man possesses the wealth of two worlds—this present in character and conscious rectitude, and by faith and hope the heaven which is to be hereafter.

If the minister must move—for we will return to the thought before us—if he must move, we say, it is simply the hardest time on him during the year, unless, perhaps, there comes a time in the year when one-half of the stewards get too busy with their own affairs to collect any quarterage till the dolorous blue Saturday morning of the quarterly meeting, and we banish the thought of the other half as having taken lessons from Professor Procrastination, whose purpose it is to hold them still a few days longer,

and starve out, if possible, God's servant. If, when the minister has to move to a new charge, the stewards and members would be quick to take in the situation and send wagons and vehicles, where it is reasonably possible for them to do so, and move his family and plunder to the work—parsonage or hired house—it would oftentimes supplement the small and inadequate salary, and save the pastor a heavy strain and a feeling of "hard run" to begin with.

While we do not put the question boastfully of our brethren, yet we must say that, from some years of association with them, Methodist ministers are among the most liberal and philanthropic of all the men we have ever known. We state that which we know to be true when we say that they sometimes pay to the calls made at the Annual Conference of the fragment left from the money of the last quarter of the year until they have to borrow money to go home on. And yet more. We have known ministers at such time and place to pay to worthy objects the very last cent of money they had. And we doubt not but that as large a pro-

portion of the lay representatives do the same. Some of the charges are thoughtful to see that their ministers get to them and settle down without a heavy expense. In the older Conferences this could often be done; and even where settlements are sparse, and the stewards nor members could neither go and move their pastor, they and the good women might have the house and the meal ready and the store-room full when he comes. And when the messenger—their minister and pastor, God's chosen vessel to them—arrives, make him feel at home in the place provided for him and his family. Then, indeed, would he realize that he is to minister to a people who have hearts, even the sons and daughters of a great Prince. We here record our lavish praises of the godly men and women whose habit it is to not forget this thoughtful ministry. We are no epicure, but the practical religion which prepares and spreads a meal in the name and for the sake of Jesus is a lofty piety. Angels preside at that table. What we do is the test. "I was hungry," says Jesus, "and ye fed me."

We most heartily believe that, from the insignificant salaries paid Methodist ministers, seven-tenths of them, after the Annual Conference expenses of going and returning are deducted, could not move with their families across the Conference to a new charge without borrowing money or going in debt some way. The horses, wagons, and buggies that you did not supply to help your pastor over the falling bridge and above the waves of the angry waters of trouble will be matter of pale astonishment to you when you wistfully come face to face with the judgment. We must take a practical view of this subject—something that every-day life can reach and appropriate; something that will reach the steward, and spring him into a new life to collect quarterly every dollar due the minister; something that will make the member love to pay till his minister is supported as well as he lives; something that will make us all, as ministers and people, feel that we are robbing God and writing our own death-warrant if we do not keep his Church amply supplied with pastors by supporting them above want. These are vital issues of to-day.

When Conference is over let your earliest correspondence be directed to your new pastor, and you shall soon learn when it will suit him for you to move him into your midst. You say, "But the charge is poor, and cannot pay much." Well, do n't yawn and parley about it, my friend. If the people are poor, or you are poor, you are not the worse for that. Would you exchange properties even with your minister? But this much we say, that if you have got a wagon and team, and could reach your pastor and help to move him to his work if he needs you, and you do not do it, you would not do much for him if you were rich. This rule may be laid down as of universal application: The man who will not pay to the Church of God out of his poverty in exact proportion to his ability would not, if he were rich, pay in like manner. Men of wealth, as a rule, are now precisely what they were when they were poor—possibly a little closer. The pity of God is earnestly invoked upon self-deceived men!

Bishop A. W. Wilson says, "The paucity of paying is one of the sins of the Church."

What greater mind has spoken on this question? And if the Christian Church stands before the world in such a relation, and the human mind, veiled and impeded as it is by flesh and blood, can see so clearly the obstacles which lie in the way of present progress and ultimate success, what must be the awful solicitude of the heart of the Son of God when he, knowing all things, sees that the brother man could in the space of a few years, by wisely directed effort of money, mind, and heart, subjugate all peoples and realms to the religion of peace and love? O Son of God, give us larger and better hearts! Alexander, the renowned military genius, with a godless ambition, desired not less than to conquer the world. With sword and fagot, with arsenal and battering-ram, on he marched with his bloody warriors, abdicating thrones and swathing kingdoms with his sickles of steel, till the whole earth trembled at his name. What maudlins we Christians be! How many kingdoms do we thirst to conquer for our Lord? how many thrones to set up in the hearts of the peoples for Prince Immanuel? Here are questions that may

seem pungent, but we are willing that they shall be tested by the rules of the word of God. First, if a man is a Christian he sincerely desires every other human being on the face of the earth to be saved through Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. Secondly, he prays for this happy consummation. Thirdly, he works in the place he is for it. Fourthly, he pays. Fifthly, if he is the altogether Christian, his purse is as much set apart to the work of God as is his heart, and renders equally the same willing service. Any one who is thus adjusted to life can work on, not questioning what the end shall be; but any person who is not so adjusted has cause, even in his moments of greatest sincerity, for self-examination and diligent, anxious inquiry, and the reason is that the ends of the rules laid down are possible for every man to attain, and what is possible and needful God requires. Beyond this is of grace. God always begins just where man reaches his own human limits.

We do not know of any usage in vogue in the Christian Church which supplies a better

means of grace than the law of Methodism, which charges the steward with collecting the minister's salary quarterly at least. This offering to God, arranged for and understood by the Methodist people, is a fit prelude to the services of the quarterly meeting, and with the preceding fasting and prayer may be helpful to them in the commemoration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. To our mind it is one of the most beautiful and impressive services, with its connecting links, known to Methodism. The offering of our substance preceding the sacrament pictures more vividly to the mind the thought of the Victim of Calvary. It makes the scene more real as the symbols of the chiefest of sacrificial offerings, even the death of the Son of God, are before us, while the heart tones up with touches of the heavenly fires, and joyously sings:

His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.

We have yet to see a quarterly meeting where the salaries of the pastor and presiding elder were paid up that was a religious failure. It could not be. In it all the condi-

tions for the blessing of God are met. Paying, fasting, and prayer go before and accompany the meeting, and these are the conditions of blessing and salvation.

Another thing much overlooked is this: Your pastor is either within the bounds of the charge he serves or not far away. No doubt he would be with you if you had a parsonage. But your county-town, to which you go on "first Mondays," is perhaps as far from your home as your pastor resides. You have poultry, eggs, butter, fruit, etc., and many tempting and necessary supplies, and in greater abundance than the itinerant Methodist minister can have them. Under the law he may have been moved two consecutive years, and this may be repeated often during his itinerant life. If so, he is put at a great disadvantage, and if his Conference meets in the fall, in much of the territory occupied by the Church, South, when he moves two successive years he cannot mature some of the winter vegetables nor husk and crib the late patch of corn. Such supplies must come from somewhere. When raised and parted with so soon some

one left behind will get a bargain, and the people ahead, to whom the minister goes as a pastor, should throw open the gate of the charge at once that provender and family supplies be not a hinderance to an early introduction to the work. If the rural districts are as they were when we were growing up, there is about as much—yes, more—lost every year by neglect and waste on the average farm as the owner occupying pays to the support of the ministry. The waste of corn which is gathered too late; the sprouting of wheat in the shock by neglect or by inattention; the pestiferous weevil, which is allowed to creep into the garner; or the stock that perish in unshedded lots or badly managed pastures—all this occurs, and the end is not yet. So the farmer, by dwarfing business and springing leaks for his income to be lessened, may find a place to cry out “Hard times!” but if the annual wastes of the sections embraced in many of the circuits were carefully saved and marketed in their season, there is no doubt in our mind but that the ministers, if they received nothing more than such proceeds, would be better

supported than they are. Who is responsible for this? And if it be true, why do not the good Christian people of the land—the men who own and tenant the country—anybody, everybody, gather up these fragments and ease themselves of what they sometimes denominate “burden-bearing,” and so by an earnest effort pay the ministry a living free from want with what they have, or get these fragments together and use them, which would, in results, be as marvelous as the multiplying of the loaves and fishes? While this fact, as we think, applies to the rural districts, the Christians of the average town or city will spend as much for the playhouse, worldly frolic, and fun as would keep their churches at high-tide, supply annually their libraries with standard books and pure, fresh literature, replenish the parsonage library with the works of the latest and best authors, and place the ministry in a position to command the highest respect of the populace. This would make the children of these places, from habits of reading and closer contact with the springs of thought in the pulpit, moral pillars in society and

give them the character and strength of a Colossus as citizens.

God has so typed the order of the religious mind that it is not necessary that a minister should be rich in worldly possessions to have standing or influence. Not even amidst the highest developments of social life, of refinement, culture, and the opulence of wealth, does this obtain. Wealth cannot introduce him as a minister. As a student of God's word and minister of his grace, who has had his heart refined by a religion of love, and learned the great lessons of life at the mercy-seat, he needs no introduction through wealth to any class of society from the palace of the prince to the hovel of the lowly. It is not so with other men; but in this it is the order of God. We cannot explain it.

Let not the reader think that we are taking his matters into our hands. Not so. We are in nowise afraid of the intelligence of man. Wanting to do right, and see good come of it, we present such principles only as will, we trust, be for the betterment of the race and the growth and enlargement of the Church of God. We are not for hobbies.

The trend of this volume is for old Methodism, with its primitive fairness and honesty and its altar-fires rekindled. New methods and appliances should be made available in the Church as well as in the field of science, provided that such methods and appliances do not ingraft themselves upon the public mind as a substitute for established principles. We believe that the Christian's purpose is to always try to do better—be more religious, more like Jesus. Dr. Clarke puts it pithily when he says, "Ever try to exceed your former self." We have a holy horror for the society of that man or woman who has very prim ideas about religion, and yet who sits still and does little or nothing but talk. The heart that is fullest of the odors of heaven is the one that, like the crushed rose, emits its sweetest fragrance of piety when laden with its own and the burdens of others.

Before we close this chapter we are anxious to know when the steward or member is going to the parsonage with some of the supplies for the minister which burden his own table. You will find a class of people who

never want a fowl until it is dressed and ready for the cook. Such are ridiculously dependent at best. The boy who can hunt through the wet weeds for goose-eggs, set the goose, and attend the goslings till they are raised and grown, and then help his mother pick the geese when they are full-fledged, has that mother's tenderest care of life and love. "He's my boy," says she. It is all in the fact that he gives himself up to a mother's cares. Such a boy would make a good member of the Church, and doubtless would not flinch in the stewardship. But that other fellow, who simply wants to lounge on a good feather-bed made ready to hand, is the man who rests on his oars in the Church, lets the minister starve, or get along somewhere in the neighborhood, and just sleeps on piously, Rip-Van-Winkle-like, believing that God will send the ravens with bread to feed Elijah again.

We believe that the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, could not do a more needed work—a work beautiful in itself and touchingly grateful in its ministries—than by common understanding among them-

selves to carry in person or send to the parsonage, whether it be far or near, at regular intervals, and without exacting charge or cost, such edibles and bonbons as would make the minister's table fruitful of plenty, and by so doing give his good wife immunity from anxiety and want when he is out filling his appointments, or unexpected company comes in. Yes, let it be the free-will and heart-offering of the good women of the charge, for the morals and piety of whose husbands and children the minister labors in the study, pastoral work, and the pulpit every day and night that he lives among them. Stop the leakages of the home, and head yourselves toward the parsonage, ye godly women, and, our word for it, the pastor's larder will never fail, and the interest you take in this work will be reflected upon your children for good. It will make your households more receptive under the preaching of your minister, while, like Abraham's, the example will be as a perpetual command for your children to come after you in the better way.

One pious, discreet woman could affect a

whole charge for good in town or country-place in a cause like this. She could enter channels closed against the steward, and open the door of hearts steeled to professional appeals. She has more endurance than man. Intelligent, with a good cause in hand, when consecrated to religion and the higher aims of life, she never trifles. She has often demonstrated the forcible lessons taught by Longfellow when he says:

Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

It is a most singular fact connected with the experience of the human race that there are fewer men who live like they were immortal than women. The name of woman is recorded high up on the column of fame in the history of the world's heroines. Her gentleness of character, responsiveness of heart, and natural religious bent of life—by these she has done and is doing much for God and humanity. There are thousands of Methodist women now living, with every needed qualification of mind and heart, who

might perform this noble work, and be added to that bright galaxy of consecrated womanhood along with the Lavinia Kelleys, Barbara Hecks, Lady Huntingdons, the Dorcases, and the Marys, and by an increased activity relieve the minister of the death-sighs of worry and want about a living; and with this just estimate of her value, it is more than an ordinary problem why so many Methodist ministers in regular charges, while they preach to congregations where one-half or more of each of them are women, should with their families be in want, at times, for the simplest comforts of life. Where, O where, is her hand of help? she who stood by and heard in the last tragedy the piteous, parting words of her dying Son—God's coëqual—as he looked toward another, and then on Mary, and said to one who stood near by, "Behold thy mother;" she who threaded her way to Joseph's sepulcher before the day-dawn, with no other desire to satiate than that she should find that Jesus was risen from the dead. How can she be unmindful of the wants, sacrifices, trials, and sore distresses of the ministers of that Jesus

now? To forget them is to forget him. How can she approach the cross or linger at the sepulcher without a thought for the comfort of his representative—her minister—whose heart of bleeding cares reburdens itself daily for the salvation of her sons and daughters? Impossible! Southern Methodist women could bless the parsonage with what they have of garden, farm, store-room, and dry goods—the surplus which they do not need and cannot consume. Even this, and nothing more, would redeem the minister's heart from most painful humiliation. And larger in sympathy and love will be the life of that pastor who is treated as if his parishioners wanted the best of labor and preaching power there is in him.

In some places we see the buddings of this work. One year is ample time for this revolution to begin. Let it begin as soon as Conference is over, and be kept up till the latest generation. When well provided for, the minister will bear rebuke if he becomes self-indulgent. There is no time to be lost. Short pasturage, poor preaching. Poor preaching, shabby Christians. We do not

believe that the eighteen hundred years past have diminished the love of Jesus in a mother's heart. Thank God, she still lives to pray, work, and sing! Let this work be done. The stewards have theirs. It is all to the same end. The reward is sure. It never did fail; for the giving of a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple brings a disciple's reward.



CHAPTER III.

Assessment plan—Each member embraced in—Time of payment fixed by stewards—Idolatry in the Church—Envelope system—Minister Christ by proxy—Relations of member—Steward—Minister—Commissariat—Objections to paying—Questions—Answers—God's harvester—Charge of fraud made by the Word—Mummy steward—One rule—Another class—Dribblers—Vows—Stingy members—Ten cents on the dollar for the soul—Model Christians—Putting off paying till the close of the year—Trial to the minister—Grief at the door of the parsonage—First duty after Conference—Pewry—Lives that are immortal.

THE law of Methodism—if it may be termed such—touching the assessment plan should be known by every member of the Church in the Connection. A Discipline in every household, with the Bible and a Methodist hymn-book, when read, would be a good instructor. It would lighten and facilitate the work of the steward much if every member of the Church understood what the Discipline expected of him. The minister and steward both have a grave responsibility here. If the steward will work

and be guided by a discreet judgment, he will see the wisdom of following the Discipline, which says: "Each member of the Church is expected to pay according to his or her several ability for the support of the ministry; and the stewards of each station or circuit shall determine whether payments are to be made weekly, monthly, or quarterly during the year. They shall then ascertain how much each member is able and willing to pay in the installments fixed by the stewards; and whatever amount each member agrees to pay he or she shall be under solemn obligation to pay, and can only be released from this obligation by the order of the stewards, or by vote of the Church Conference for good cause shown." This plan is the result of the ripe intelligence of those who have in the past composed the only legislative body of the Methodist Church—the General Conference—and is a plan which was suggested more by the growth of experience than the mere accident of extraneous causes. It was a need, and might be said, like the body of Methodist doctrine and polity, to have been a providential growth. The

thoughtful steward, after having, according to the Discipline, had his pastor present when his salary was fixed, will, in keeping with the plan quoted, from the surrounding conditions of the charge and its consequent demands, determine how often payments shall be made, bearing in mind, however, as he will, that the utmost limit is one quarter.

The plan quoted from the Discipline was not intended to make Methodist ministers rich. If so, it is very defective. As a class they are poor, yet in the true sense making many rich. We have no defense to make for covetousness in a Methodist minister, if such a thing may be found, any more than we have for the covetousness of the member. To charge a professed Christian with being a worshiper of Buddha or Moloch would be an offense; but in the category of members which Paul exhorts the brethren at Colosse to "mortify" was the propensity to covetousness—inordinate love of gain—which he says "is idolatry." Now, if we are covetous, to be put down in Christian America or in the Church of Jesus Christ, with the Chinese, Japanese, the followers of El Mahdi,

and other idolaters, as distasteful as it may be, is but giving us our proper classification; and when Heaven hypothecates the earth must be silent.

For the minister to expect his steward to pay, through the Church, all of his salary—it being generally the minimum figures of a living—as a voluntary and honorable contract made by him for himself and the members, should disturb the equanimity of no one; and in asking it there is not the least semblance of covetousness with the minister. If practicable, the stewards may adopt the envelope system, and, with accompanying explanatory circular of well-chosen words, send envelopes to each member for every Sunday or service in the year, which envelopes may be taken up at the church by the collectors. The amount assessed should be named in the circular, and the time mentioned within which the member is to ratify it, so that there be no coercion in a work the “willingness” of the doing of which alone determines the reward. We are inclined to the view that the loyal masses would take it as a favor if the stewards would provide a

plan like this, as the littles could be paid often, while the sum of these small amounts paid regularly on Sunday, could not, oftentimes, be quartered and paid, or turned over at any one time during the year. The amounts so paid in should be kept with great care in a book, so that every member may get credit for what he pays. The board of stewards would find this work educative of their body, the secretary and treasurer, as well as the Church.

The steward's treatment of his minister is his conduct toward Jesus Christ; for what he does to his minister he does to the Lord, whose representative the minister is. And when he has made a promise or contract for his Church to pay so much, barring unforeseen calamitous contingencies, he ought to see his minister through with the same honor to the Church with which he would meet his own note or bank-account. If some men were to attend to their private business as we have known them to attend to the Lord's, they would soon go into bankruptcy.

When the applicant for membership presented himself to the minister before the altar

of the Lord and in the presence of the congregation, he took the solemn vow that he would, by the help of God, "be subject to the Discipline of the Church, attend upon its ordinances, and support its institutions."

When one has thus sworn before men and witnessing angels, he gives himself wholly to God in purse, estate, body, and soul. By this act he puts his hands to the plow, or the Christian service, as a complete dedication of his life, in all things, to the Church. Our Lord therefore says that "no man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." If the Scriptures deery such a man—yea, pronounce him unfit for the kingdom of God—what hardihood would not unbend before a catastrophe whose sullen doom is as inevitable as logic can make it?

We know of no three classes of persons who occupy the same relations as the member, the steward, and the minister of the Methodist Church. When one joins the Methodist Church he surrenders the right to select his pastor; and when a member is made a steward he is not at liberty to let his

likes or dislikes interfere with his official work in the support of his pastor; while the Methodist polity reaches its climax when the Methodist minister, on entering the Annual Conference, surrenders the right to choose his appointment, and consents willingly to go, as he oftentimes does, to the midst of a community of strangers, where there is not a familiar face or any earthly kindred. The indorsement of his character by an Annual Conference is worth more among the people than a king's seal. On getting to his charge he is soon at home. We have seen him—for our own heart goes out in gratitude to the living and the memory of the dead for like blessings—receive the tender ministries of ready, whole-souled member and steward, who could forego personal pleasure and comfort as strangers for their minister, himself a stranger to them. There is a divinity in the system which impels a Methodist minister to make himself liable to take his family to any charge. And how supreme his confidence in the members—to whom he goes without fee or previous contract—for the maintenance of himself and family, with no

other thought than that the steward or stewards will be his commissariat and supply his wants. The annual recurrence of this fact illustrates the dignity, honor, and mutual confidence of Methodist Christians. It is scarcely surpassed in the flight of Abraham, who by the command of Jehovah went to a distant country without a line of geography or topography, which place should afterward become the scene of an historic triumph of faith for admiring ages.

Sometimes the steward is impeded in his work by varying, Proteus-like currents of public sentiment. No distemper, however general, should interfere with the steward's making his constant, best efforts to support his pastor.

A class of members object to their pastor because he preaches too long, too plain; he is dry, boisterous, lazy, too smart, or too something. It were a pity he has not a congregation to preach to who have no faults. We do not doubt that many of the blows which the twenty-dollar Bible gets, talked up by the women in their aid society, ought to be divided between the sexton and the old

dingy manuscript, if copied from the "Five Hundred Sketches and Skeletons;" for it were criminal to run matter like that into one's mind. But no matter what the idiosyncrasies of the minister, the member nor the steward need either make himself chargeable to conscience by withholding from him a support. If a support should fail the minister, then he is licensed to appropriate the Grecian epizeuxis with old-time Methodist zeal. A revival of the music of the pedal extremities might arouse sleeping Methodists when other thunders have failed.

But let us illustrate: A man goes into the harvest-field and reaps down the landlord's grain, and when he comes in, and has partaken of refreshments, he says: "Well, I am tired, and must rest. I will go home to my wife and children, but would like to have my day's wages, as I have nothing ahead and only get by my labor." The landlord looks at his wife, and she returns the look of surprise, and finally, after a little husky clearing up of the voice, he says: "We—the old woman and I—belong to Slaygood Chapel, over the hill; and I tell you we have some

powerful meetin's there. The old woman shouts and I shout, and we have just a big time, and old Uncle Billy Jones can be heard prayin' a mile; but—but we don't pay people any more who harvest for us." Sadly the poor harvester turns away and bends his weary steps toward his humble home, while beads of sweat gather upon his honest brow, and in their iridescence soften the moonlight without as they trickle over his eyelashes, only to increase the throes of an aching heart as he passes on to meet a loving wife and hungry children. You ask, "Did such a thing ever occur?" We answer that we do not say so, though we have heard rumors. At any rate, the act of this landlord who would not pay his harvest-hand was enough to have given him a national reputation. Your minister is a harvester. When you pay him you pay to the Lord. We do not know whether you have paid him or not, but you do. We would all rise in holy revolt at the thought of being as mean as the landlord in question; but if your minister—God's harvester—has not been paid, here is what St. James says about it: "Behold the hire of

the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

How would it have done during the late campaign for the English Government to put an Egyptian mummy at the head of the commissary department of the army of General "Chinese" Gordon in the Soudan and let the soldiers look to it for rations? If the steward does nothing, he does precisely as much as the mummy; and the only difference is that the mummy is the better one of the two, for while it cannot do the other will not do. The steward, while he must often take counsel with his brethren, is sometimes drowned out by too much advice. Wise counselors are a blessing. Common advice is cheap, and the market often glutted. The steward ought to be a man with a head on—a thinking man. The hard-working, judicious, consecrated steward keeps the minister in the field, and he will share with the good people who stand by him and work with him in the reward of the

harvest of souls which his minister gathers in for his Lord.

The minister loves such a steward, the angels love him, and God loves him more. The Church lays her honors at his feet, while his Lord holds out the crown of life, and those members—the men, women, and children—who, in adversity, poverty, or plenty, help by prayer and money to the utmost of their ability will have happy hearts, the approval of Jesus Christ in this life, and a home as bright, pure, and rich as Heaven can make it in the life to come.

The Master gives us one rule—enough within itself to prove the authorship of the Scriptures divine. It embodies a principle of universal application. Read what it says: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Such is the charter of rights between man and his fellows. The unrestrained, stingy, pelfy part of the world, those men who hoard for self only and gorge themselves on usury, and in their meekness and cunning grow sleek and fat on widows' dowers and orphan's estates, are mercenarily as corrupt as Judas Iscariot, and

have not attained to the standard for suitable companionship with Ananias and Sapphira.

But the steward finds a class of members who are always willing to be assessed, and pay as "God hath prospered them." Of this class more hereafter. Another class are willing to pay, but refuse to be assessed. They will "leave the Church;" "it is taxation," they say, and their piety cannot stand that. Here is work for the steward, and a good deal of unnecessary trouble besides. The minister's salary is five hundred dollars say, and the steward wants a basis to look to that a conclusion may be reached and plans laid for raising the amount. Now look at the "taxing" question. The State taxes their farms and merchandise, but they do not leave it on that account. Are they more pious to the State than to the Church? They price their swine to their neighbors and sell other products for special sums. Is the gospel worth nothing to their homes only as it blesses them? and shall the minister's salary be hazarded in the house of his friends?

There were cripples in the Church in the days of Jesus, and a hospital is still needed.

By such a course they may successfully do two things—namely, greatly hinder dispatch of the Church's business, and jeopardize their minister's comfort. But the steward must not become discouraged. No; the magnitude of his work is great. As well might the "Great Eastern," breasting the billows of the Atlantic Ocean with her cargo of supplies for Ireland's needy thousands, cast anchor and stop to nose after the minnows that nibble and fret at her iron-clad sides as for the steward to allow the sloth and paucity of the paying of some members to arrest his zeal. It is a little ludicrous, but more serious, to hear of a man who is sensitive about paying to the Church when he consumes twenty dollars' worth of tobacco in a year and makes no complaint, and the senses bewilder when one learns that this same man pays five dollars additional for whisky and gathers his own dogwood and cherry-tree bark.

It would be far more Christ-like for one to employ his time in replenishing his minister's wood-pile than in rioting, and when those days recur, each in its season, to not

forget the Thanksgiving or Christmas turkey for the manse, and to not be under the ban of suspicion that one may stay away from the services of the Church because he has so often broken his promise to the steward to pay his part of the pastor's salary. Such a course cannot conceal any thing from the Lord or the people. The remedy is to remain in your place and be doubly diligent in labors as the Lord is permitting you to run awhile on credit.

There are a class of members also who pay little, and the dribblet they do pay is grudgingly paid. It is like straining New Orleans molasses through a piece of osnaburg to get any thing out of them. They have never read understandingly what the psalmist says when he affirms, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." While a man is in this world he belongs to God, and there is but one way for him to do and get to a better, and that is to live by this resolution of Paul's: "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we

are the Lord's." Think of the close, grudging members in the face of language like this, and reflect a moment upon the fact that it is one in spirit with their Church vows, which, when assumed, they promised to be no more their own but their Lord's henceforth. If these brethren we have before us willed the Lord every thing for his service and glory when they took the vows, and then, when opportunity was offered, refused to pay a tenth of their gross income to him for the support of the ministry and to charity, they effected quite a sham performance, and deceived themselves about one hundred per cent. If they were trying to play a joke on the Lord, they will soon find their prank turned into sorrow. Mr. Wesley tells a story which illustrates clearly that people do not mean all they say or sing. A collection was to be taken, and while the congregation lifted their hearts in singing the stanza,

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all,

there was one man present who, while sing-

ing it lustily, was all the time fingering to the depths of his pockets to find the least penny he had to offer as a contribution. Two grains of sand contributed to the Lord as two hemispheres with him.

The next class of members we mention are those who do not and will not pay any thing to the Church. To say they are stingy is to speak mildly of them. They want their pastor's worth in visiting; and his preaching is all a libation to them, except the paying part. When their minister takes a collection they close their eyes in a most heavenly manner, as if it were too unhallowed a thing to be announced in their angelic ears. They sing and shout and pray for "souls" for their pastor's "hire" and "seals to his ministry." By this lithe performance they evidently think their prayers and the souls won a sufficient contribution to the wants of their pastor, however much his digestive organs may disagree with them. They are tight-fisted, and not less rhapsodical; and the wonder is that they do not employ some artificial means to close up their pharynx and abolish their ventricle, that such expensive physical de-

mands as food and drink might no more ingulf their fleshly sensibilities or grate upon the tender conscience of their purses. It would be cause for a ripple of a sensation to hear them sing in a love-feast Charles Wesley's couplet:

The Christian lives to Christ alone,
To Christ alone he dies.

If the hypothesis be true that one's faith rises no higher than the level of his devotional frame of mind, then their prayers would rise about as high up in the heavens as Tom Thumb could toss an elephant or a humming-bird fly toward paradise with Pike's Peak tied to its tail. A selfish man will not improve, because he sees none better than himself. Oliver Goldsmith puts it well when he says that "people seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy." And if Horace Mann is right when he says that "from the prevalent state of the mind actions proceed as water from a fountain," he gives a key by which we may determine who the selfish man is in worldly things as well as in religion. Richard Watson says that that artful device of home-made

scripture, "Charity begins at home," is a "neat pocket edition of selfishness;" and Dr. Haygood would like to know if the man who quotes this is suffering himself, wife, and children to be "supported by charity."

We have a natural antipathy for penuriousness and jealousy, or any thing else that makes religion look little. Some members excuse themselves from sins of delinquency and selfishness by charging that their pastor and his family dress beyond their means. "Too much finery," they say; and no doubt this is true if there are many such penny-wise and pound-foolish pietists in the Church as they are. If the minister dons a suit quite as simple and primitive as that worn by Adam, they would then complain and grumble that the "fig-leaves were gathered out of season, leaving the trees injured, and the wearer, therefore, might have passed the winter before indulging in costly luxuries." The steward fondles and pets and expends much tender, persevering zeal on them, with the same success of those disciples who fished all night and caught nothing. Take care, friend, that you do not eat breakfast with

one of this class to-morrow morning. They may be provided for in the plan of salvation, but cannot reckon themselves children of God till their repentance, reformation, restitution, and faith have, by the Holy Ghost, transformed them into "new creatures in Christ Jesus," and made their hearts as ready to give their temporal substance to God as they were to trust him for the pardon of sin.

A man who had practiced law ten years, then medicine for ten years, then preached the gospel for ten years, came to this conclusion after an experience of thirty years: That a "man would give ninety cents on the dollar to save his property, fifty cents on the dollar to save his body, and ten cents on the dollar to save his soul." If the steward can change this record till a man will give equally as much to save his soul as his property, he will have wrought a great work.

An American philosopher, whether he is right or not, thinks the reason why a churchmouse is so poor is "because it tries to live on religion alone." Intrenched in selfishness, the Church observes the air and notes the tone of the victims of avarice gloat-

ing in poetic frenzy: "Myself am king of me."

They that are selfish, niggardly, the earth-worms of the Church, pay tithes to the Lord out of their love of it! Itonus, with his countless treasures of wealth, smothering his little five-cent and dime pieces into the collection-basket, could not imagine himself worse fleeced than selfish people do when the noise of their pennies dropped into the Lord's treasury rattles in their ears like cart-wheels running over a macadamized road.

It would be a surprise to the country if the philanthropist George I. Seney, now that he has lost his millions by adverse fortune, were to seek to recover his benefactions made to institutions of learning and charity, would it not? Instead of that he says, in substance, "What I gave I saved." But it would be no surprise to hear of stingy people, if Gehenna were as convenient to them as their gardens are, being found some morning under surveillance of the city authorities, before the police court, to answer for their venality in inadvertently getting fire and brimstone for

their grates out of the wrong pile to avoid the tax of coal-bills. Such is our opinion of the hardness of stingy people, which opinion will be modified as the change comes on.

Things are strangely contradictory in this life. Look at this case in point: A man of the world lays up much. He therefore reasonably expects to leave much for his children; but if he does not lay up he cannot give. If a member of the Church does nothing in service or by money to advance the cause of the Lord, what can he expect? Eternity does not, in this sense, magnify numbers nor water the stock a man takes in heavenly things. Our influence, our deeds, the thoughts that we have thought, go out from us thronging every hour; they are a power that moves to and fro on the earth; and if possessions, self, and soul, consecrated and redeemed, are employed for the Lord, they may take yet a mightier range as the years roll on; and when we have gone up to mansions bright and fair, we may look down and of those Christly deeds say with Faber:

And mighty are the marvels they have wrought
In hearts we know not, and may never know.

The Church and the world stand in admiration of the first class of members we mentioned. They are models of consecration and models in paying. We think their class large in the Methodist Church; and the steward would join us in the wish that they are in the majority. If not, they are worthy so to be. The Methodist pulpits in the land would go down, its altars be forsaken, Ichabod would be written over the doors of its temples of worship, and waste and ruin, and the desolating, hideous waters of Erebus, with its wild, black waves dashing against the fleecy robes of earth's redeemed sons and daughters, ensue, if it were not for this class of Methodist Christians. The liberal, brave-hearted, active, laborious, successful, pious Methodist steward, who trusts it not to others, but sees to it and knows for himself that his pastor is supported—along with the good livens of his charge—while he would disclaim inordinate praise, is a prince among men; and the crowning with other than the eulogies of human tongues will come upon his worthy head by and by. And the members who stand by him in life's battles shoulder to

shoulder in the Church's work will be steadfast by the throne, and join in the coronation hymn when their Lord shall appear, and sing with kindred voices:

Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all!

A class of members will pay the steward for the minister in proportion as they are coaxed, flattered, and nursed by him, or "benefited by his services," as they term it. We affirm that the presence of a minister with a charge, under regular appointment of ecclesiastical authority, with service rendered, or proposed to be rendered, to the best of his ability, is sufficient reason alone for the Church paying him a salary in exact proportion to its ability. Try the principle simply of benefits received. Only about seventy-five per cent. of a Methodist charge—and we think the principle not exceptional in other Churches—are fully suited to the pastor and he to them. We believe that no observant person will controvert this. Very well. Now, withdraw from the pastor's salary and the Conference collections the twenty-five per cent., which is one-fourth of the

charge, whose religious wants, from temperament and diverse cast of mind, are not met in their pastor, and the finances collapse. It is true, even when a change of pastors is made, that while it restores the conditions which will supply the demands of that twenty-five per cent., it creates the same state of things with twenty-five per cent. more. So the remedy is not yet, but the solution is easy. Let the whole membership regard the minister appointed to labor among them as employed by them; for so he is. Then the vow taken on entering the Church to "support its institutions" will form a proper Christian incentive to duty.

We have known some good people in the Church to put off their willing contributions for the support of the ministry till the close of the year. They would not afflict the minister whom they love; but the habit is a bad one. One of this class of members employs a man to work for him a week. Taking the week for the pastor's year, along toward its close the member says: "I like my workman, and if he does good work I'll pay him his wages Saturday night." Does he know that

his minister is in mental agony over debts contracted to serve him; and to not pay him till Saturday night—end of the Conference-year—will increase the distress of his honest heart? He no doubt intends to be kind to his pastor; and a little thoughtful, Christ-like meditation and action about the omission would unload pale grief elsewhere than at the door of the minister's heart. He has enough to bear in the ordinary course of the ministry. The souls of the people are to be fed. Why not provide for the pastor willingly and systematically, as he provides for the souls of the people? "Freely ye have received, freely give," is the Bible injunction. We have never known a Methodist minister, while they are not without their faults as men and as ministers, to fail to do his general work willingly. The burdens of his office would be easier to bear and his consolation in God more like the peaceful flow of a river, if no studied unkindness should ever fall to his portion; for then "man's inhumanity to man" would not bring weeping to the parsonage.

Conference adjourned, the Methodist min-

ister is restless till he looks on the faces of the men, women, and children who compose his new charge. Their spiritual wants are his deepest concern. With him, like the sainted Bishop Marvin, their "souls employ his sweetest thoughts, and are borne on his prayers while he lingers at the mercy-seat." Every thought he has is to kindle the fires of spiritual life anew in them, and sink self out of sight before the rising majesty of the cross of Christ. The lost soul is a burden upon his heart. The faltering step of his brother excites his sympathy, while the sufferer on his bed of languishing shares in his ministry of tenderness and love. The dying are comforted and the dead are buried by him. On all occasions of joy and sadness, of living trouble and trial, on bright days and murky days, in feebleness or strength, through winter's cold or summer's sun, the Methodist minister must be at his post. Such are the arbitrary, unwritten laws in the minds of the people. And the Methodist minister, as if acting under the well-defined laws of God, seeing the urgency of the calls of humanity in these diverse conditions,

foregoes personal ease and comforts, and justly, at the expense of material fortune, and sometimes at the risk of health and life, responds willingly to the demands of his race, though disease and death await him.

All of these conditions surround the minister, and impose demands upon him quite equal to his strength and courage. For whom are these outlays of labor and heartaches made? By a little reflection the people can answer.

All of this suggests a question of the greatest moment. It is the first and last duty of every Methodist charge in the Connection toward the minister sent to labor for the good of their souls to begin to support him decently—as if he were a Christian gentleman among the truest and bravest of Christian men and women—when his work opens or the appointment is made. It is the custom of Methodist ministers to take charge of or enter upon their work in haste after Conference. Their rule is to not loiter. They have a conscience. The Master goes with them. Sometimes there is an avalanche of disasters emptied in their pathway,

but they go, blessed be God, with the spirit of prayer burning in their hearts and tune-ful song breaking forth from their lips.

Upon his coming every member should rise up in his place like the soldiery of a well-drilled army, and stand for the battle. It would be an embarrassment, a calamity, for any of the members of the station, circuit, or mission to obstruct the minister's happiest introduction to the masses of the people. No preference or disappointment at not getting the minister to whom you feel attached should ever, by your bearing toward your present pastor, afflict him. He is with you in obedience to the law of the Church; and he could not, as a Methodist minister, be elsewhere. We have heard of one charge, being displeased, that officially notified the new pastor that he was at liberty to go or stay, as he chose; and if he staid, to "support himself." It takes even more than this to side-track a Methodist minister. We thought of Dr. Green's sermon to young ministers when the above fact of a fellow-laborer's startling case was reported. It was news to a large class of young ministers who were at

Conference seeking admission, and we doubt not to many others as well, when the good Doctor in a special sermon told them that some of them would not only go to hard charges, "but," said he facetiously, "stay till you starve to death, and then come back and tell us, and we'll change you." We remember how the boots of one young minister involuntarily played round upon the floor as he looked through the rain-fall of tears at the speaker's face, as the remark so passing strange fell from his lips.

It is matter of singular importance for you, my brother, to take charge of the pastor's comfort without delay. We have often heard it said that when a man is very religious there is no trouble to get him to do liberally for his pastor. His influence and money help on the cause of religion and supply his pastor's table, each in its own way.

It is possible there is a radical fault somewhere. We think men are about as religious as they want to be—we mean that they enjoy as much of the power of religion as they wish. If they say not, we most sincerely believe they are mistaken. And why

not? God is the same, grace the same, and their capabilities for asking the same. And more, God puts no unwilling mind in them to keep them away from his Love. Therefore, they are what they are by their own election; for God is unchangeable. If man wants to be better, there is no trouble about it except with himself.

Present religious enjoyment and safety—that state of heart as defined by Paul in his letter to the Romans when he says, “Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”—is the clearest assurance that any man ever had that he was a child of God and an heir of heaven. Such is Paul’s simple definition of religion; and Paul gets it from the Master by the Holy Ghost, through the instruction of Ananias, in the city of Damascus, on a street called Straight, in the house of one Judas. Enough is revealed in the Holy Scriptures as given by John, on the subject of the atonement—in the words: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”—

and the text above quoted, to enlighten and save the world. The atonement made by Jesus Christ, as above written, and what religion is as an experience ("the love of God"), where it is ("in our hearts"), and by whom given ("the Holy Ghost")—this, we say, is sufficient knowledge for the redemption of all nations under the sun. Religion is nothing but an experience; and after it is obtained, all knowledge should grow in harmony with it. A simple religion only would suit the world, and God, knowing man, gave it to him.

But the steward cannot always know the measure of spiritual life, zeal, and liberality his brother in the Church possesses. He may apply the thermometer, and then often be left in doubt as to what the member will do. There is an incongruity sometimes between what a man seems to feel and what he is willing to do. He may sing Newton's old hymn with ravishing sweetness, and make the couplet

And when I am happy in him,
December's as pleasant as May

fairly shake the meeting-house, and yet all the

time be clasping his pockets with both hands to hold the silver eagles in. There is a mistake somewhere. It is neither May nor December with that man. It is a different month altogether. Stinginess is a better name for it.

The polished J. G. Holland, to read whose writings is like drinking draughts from a crystal fountain of pure water, says: "I believe it is universally conceded that the man Christ Jesus lived a purer life than any other man, sympathized with the poor and lowly as no other man ever sympathized, did more for the comfort and elevation of the humble and the wretched than any other, impressed himself upon the civilization of the world beyond all predecessors and successors, and revealed a religion which, overarching all the elaborations of human philosophy, imparts to them whatever of significance they possess, and holds in itself alone the power of regenerating humanity." Wonderful testimony this. "The man Christ Jesus" lives in all the civilizations of the earth, and he is the author of them. His word is the bed-rock of civil government, and he who helps

to maintain his minister contributes to the furtherance of civilization and the permanency of his spiritual kingdom whose dominion, according to recorded prophecy, shall at a future period stretch from sea to sea and shore to shore.

It is for their peace of mind, and the consequent success of pulpit ministrations, that we plead the cause of those men who are the public representatives of Jesus Christ in this world. The dignity of the office of the minister of Christ is recognized by all, while the responsibilities of no class of men engaged in any vocation or profession known to this life are so great. Every man not purblind can see this.

The steward and member should be as ready to practice self-denial themselves in their respective spheres as they would have their minister do in his. In the sight of God his task is lighter and his manhood more noble who puts no heavier burden on the shoulders of others than he himself is willing to bear. It is a lofty attitude which the member of the Church attains when he holds himself in the exact relation to his minister

that he would like for the minister to assume toward him were their positions reversed.

This principle of our Lord, laid down for man for all ages of the world, will, when applied, strike a just balance-sheet between the member and the minister. Such equitable adjustment of the dealings of man with his fellows will hold good at the judgment at the last day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known. No other principle will do, and the sooner the steward succeeds in imparting this lesson to the people the better for him and them.

The fact that our Lord, by a divine call, keeps a living ministry in his Church, a ministry who are in the apostolical succession—a succession, too, which is known only in faith—is a strong and unanswerable argument that the people whom they are called to serve should disengage their hands of secular employment. The minister of to-day, like Apollos, Isaiah, Moses, and others, is chosen of God, and commissioned and set apart by the Holy Ghost to the special work of preaching and caring for the souls of the people.

In this work the minister must have a living. This is all we ask for him—a good honest living, the average living, which is above want. If any one shall complain at the author for making his *début* in Church literature on a subject like this, it may comfort such a person to know that to secure the end of this volume will increase the facilities for making himself and household happier, and enlarge the possible conditions which enter into a greater harvest of souls.

Among the many and onerous duties of the presiding elder is the one requiring him to look after the temporal comfort of the ministers and their families who are under his supervision in the bounds of his district. From its intricate connection with the polity of Methodism, godliness, discretion, and ability, and a superabundance of kindness of heart, and about fifty miles square of humanity, and a heavenly unselfishness, are the demands of the man who fills the office of presiding elder. But no man in this responsible office, as every reasonable mind must see, can take care of any minister in his dis-

strict unless the people are willing to do their part—in fact, though the presiding elder may plan and help to stimulate the work, yet, after all, it is the people that must do the feeding and clothing.

The steward cannot afford to make an issue. He must take care to not let the cavers monopolize his time. His work is pressing, and he should not spend time fruitlessly. His own affairs and the Church's will keep him busy.

We give this recipe for insubordinate members: When the steward meets the obstructionist, let him take out his pocket Testament and challenge him to kneel down and pray. Open the book at Matthew, seventh chapter, twelfth verse, at the "Golden Rule," and there and then try to lift him out of his own place into that of his minister. In doing so a cure may soon be effected. If not, repeat the same dose "three times a day" till the needed result is had. This recipe is gratis to all who are suffering from catarrh of small notions, or who may be in any way afflicted with the poison of the malaria of stinginess. The medicine was

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compounded in heaven, and a cure is warranted.

When the conscience of the Church is quickened on this vital question, and the eyes of members, long closed to the wants of the ministry, are fully opened, it will be the occasion of mightier conquests for our Lord, such as those which made immortal the lives of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Whitefield, and the Wesleys. Free, free your ministers, ye hosts of God Almighty, from the service of tables and the cares of providing for even plain dress, and tell them to go as beams of morning light and shed the blessings of their message from the cross upon every land; and as they go, and while they linger in the field, feed them as you live yourselves, and also feed and keep their families, and let them nestle down in the heart of your sympathies; and while prayers for your mutual help go up to heaven, souls will ripen for their future home, as the golden grain of the field ripens to the coming harvest.

In his work let the steward here remember—for to do so it will help him—the advice of Dr. Johnson, when he says: “It is worth

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a thousand pounds a year to have the habit of looking on the bright side of things." Every unbidden thought, as well as every thought in the order of continuity in the mind, will, like the coloring or hues of the shadows of the variegated flower under the sun's rays, take on in the end the tinge given it by the visual organs; hence there is nothing more important to right action than the merit of the cause from which action in any degree must itself proceed, and the predominant coloring of the character of a man's life is mostly influenced and perfected by the side of the thing he looks upon. If he has a mental distemper, like Thomas Carlyle, he will write one thing one day and quite another thing the next day. If he has parted company with certitudes and gone into frothy vagaries, like Ralph W. Emerson, he will be found drifting everywhere generally and nowhere in particular.

All of this means that if the steward has looked faithfully on the right side of this question, and means to succeed, he will succeed. If the member has made up his mind to pay, he will pay. Because the coloring

of character is true, the end to be gained will be hopeful and triumph may reasonably be assured.

Now surround the occupants of the pews—the members of the Church of God—with the conditions of want and trial which they sometimes grow upon their pastors, and call for a microscope and take a patient look into the cogitations of the minds of pewry in this changed relation, and what a discovery! We think the currents which flow and re-flow in these channels of thought would be an interesting study to one wiser in the science of mind than the writer.

We do not know a Methodist minister in the Church who would studiously increase the cares or aggravate the existing wants of any brother member, but on the contrary would accept it as a mission of love and hurry to the relief of such a one. Yes; we are sure that no midnight hour would deter a Methodist minister from responding in a crisis like this. Do not give your minister the dry-rot in the pulpit by paying him so little that he cannot buy the books he needs. The Tempter will seek to persuade you,

reader, to the other side of this question, as there is nothing he dreads more than a robust ministry. We accuse no one, nor do we withhold the worst; but so long as there is want in the pulpit there is wrong in the pew.

Here is a good story that we have heard. Whether it be true or false we cannot say, but it points a moral to the life. It runs thus: A member of the Methodist Church who had habitually ignored his assessment was suddenly aroused, and hastened to see the steward, and on finding him said: "Brother Steward, I learn you have me assessed for the support of the gospel; and as I hear the cholera is coming, and I have not the money just now to pay my pastor, I would like to fix the matter up by executing my due-bill." Whether the story be true or not, one thing is beyond all doubt, and that is that the monitor, conscience, will arraign a man at the bar of justice sooner or later, and what it fails to correct the last judgment will correct. Brother Steward, begin to take care of your minister; for, after all, it is a task of love in a double sense, as it blesses

you in the doing and him in the receiving—when he is appointed to take charge of your own soul and the souls of the people; and with a courageous membership at your back, God will increase your happiness and enlarge your field of usefulness.



CHAPTER IV.

Mock charity—Getting up a revival to pay the minister—Soot and smoke in the eyes—Remedy—Migratory members—The poor—Three Quarterly Conferences and no collection—Duty of steward to attend quarterly meetings—Ghouls of slaughter—Deficit—What ten men can do—Humiliated—One-tenth for God—No repudiation—A bare living—Consumption and general destruction sent—God the same—Not educated—Raw militia—Pay the minister a living—Alarming words of Holy Writ—Jehovah's tenants—Object of this volume—The last mile-stone—Nearing home.

THE fetich of words of St. James's man of mock charity—"Be ye warmed and filled"—never fell with more sadness on a beggar's ears than the too impersonal wish of members made to their overworked, care-worn pastor when they say: "We hope they will pay you a living this year; but if they do, it will be the first time they ever supported their pastor decently." They? Nay; it is thou. Like a general with an army, if the steward goes into the battle whipped, no

amount of such threadbare, tame, and forceless resolutions as "I hope so," or "I'll stir around," will bring the hosts of Israel to victory. The people will respond to courageous leadership, and the steward is in the place for that work.

"If our pastor can get up a revival he will get his pay," we have heard more than once. We do not exactly see how such a Church could have a revival; and besides, if it did come, the collection would be like a polar wave sweeping over the people. A membership that will not pay their pastor when out of a revival would not care to enjoy the further blessing of a collection for him when in a revival. We believe in revivals. Of apostolic type, they are the life and glory of Methodism. Evangelical Christianity is revivalistic; but we think that neither Caughy, John Newland Maffitt, nor St. Peter—the Boanerges on revival occasions—if living, could maintain the revival spirit, like all other true ministers, if it held any connection with such an object. The laborer is worthy of his hire. He must be paid; but for the honor of religion let members of the

Methodist Church beware of even the suspicion of wanting to get up a revival to "pay the pastor."

The steward meets a class of members who think they do not get their share of pastoral attention and comfort. The pastor is often sorry for this. But there are many members to be looked after; besides, there are outsiders to whom he is also sent. So he does the best he can. The long absence of the pastor from their homes puts a grain of sand in their eyes, and their hearts become inflamed; so that to comfort them is a difficult task. They are sensitive, and not slow to take exceptions. The minister is on his rounds, and for infrequent pastoral visits, with long distances to travel, and other cares, and much hard study, perhaps he is not to blame. We will illustrate: Here is a man who visits the house of his neighbor where there is a good birch-log fire; but instead of going into the fire he mounts the roof of the house and plants himself over the mouth of the chimney, where soot and smoke issue forth, but no fire. Such are they who fill their eyes with the soot and smoke of their

pastor's faults, and then complain at his pastoral work and preaching. If they would come down from the chimney-top and get before the hearth-stone of God's altar, there would be less soot and more fire. There is no honorary office in the Methodist Church, especially in the stewardship. This office is all work.

The mobile elements of Methodism are large, and these lose their privilege of paying if the steward is not watchful and systematic. Many of them are willing and liberal. This we have found in our short pastorate. But their migratory lives puts them at a disadvantage, and pastoral attention to them in their homes will form one of the sweet experiences of ministerial life to those who try it.

The presence of so many poor in the Methodist Church demonstrates its claim to be the Church of the people. While its apostolic grasp reaches the wealthy and opulent, the learned and eminent, it sends the circuit-rider to the haunts of poverty and the bed-side of the lowly; and in the waste-places the prayers of its ministers go up to

God for dying saint and sinner. Well did the old Quaker say to Mr. Wesley, "Friend John, thy people die well."

The poor need the help which comes of paying for the gospel. They are not unwilling—it is only the mite they can afford to pay that abashes them, and not the lack of a generous spirit to contribute. With due deference, they are among the most liberal members of the Church. They often pay of the little principal they have, while the more prosperous pay out of their plenty, and the rich members out of their surplusage.

Man has a divine right to honest capital, but a continuation of this right depends upon his using it well. He is responsible for its judicious management, and is due the Lord a certain per cent. of what it ought to make, whether he makes it or not, provided it could be established that it was the fault of the possessor that a reasonable income was not realized.

The steward's work is always rendered more delicate, but none the less urgent, as the conditions of life among the members

change. We have known a steward to not ask the members to pay their quarterage for one, two, and three Quarterly Conferences, all in succession, and then talk about wanting a "change of pastors" at the close of the year. We have seen the pastor himself at this juncture possessed of the same mind in a quiet way. The advice of Shakespeare on restraint is healthful, and the last part of it is particularly applicable to those people who invest or loan their means in such way that they leave no margin for what they already owe the Lord. The above writer says:

Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou owest.

We knew a steward, after he had made poor headway in collecting his pastor's salary for three-quarters of the year, to remain at home on the Sunday of the fourth quarterly meeting, when on that day about one-half of the presiding elder's and pastor's salaries was desired to be raised. It was done. The salaries were met, and in the triumphs of that hour all the people had oc-

casation to rejoice except the stay-away steward.

No steward can afford to absent himself from the quarterly meeting, unless he be providentially hindered, or by age or infirmity is unable to attend. The Discipline enjoins upon him as a duty "to attend the official meetings and the quarterly meetings." "Are there any complaints?" is a question which relates to official conduct, and not to moral character. Under the law, to habitually neglect to attend the Quarterly Conference is ground for complaint. If the business or commercial world has at any time ever made complaint against any member of a turnpike, railroad, or bank directory for willful or persistent neglect of attendance upon their meetings, where personal monetary interests were involved, it has escaped the public eye, so far as we know. The steward has only four calls a year to attend those official meetings in which every vital interest of the charge of which he is a member is to be carefully looked into. Would he be there so often as this if he were a stockholder of a million of dollars in a bank, and

the office for meeting were the church in which the Quarterly Conference is to be held? Bethere! Answer, brother. Then who is our Master, the priceless Church of Jesus Christ or Mammon?

And when the collection for the support of the ministry is reported, the equities of the case require the stewards to pay the pastor and presiding elder the amount in hand in proportion to the settled claims of each respectively. No departure from this rule should be made, unless it be by mutual consent of the parties to whom the money is due; and no liberty can be safely taken in applying moneys except upon the basis of salaries as officially fixed. There is much in the ethics of relations as well as in the equities of dealing.

The great struggle of the minister is not with labor, however arduous, for this he does with burning desire for souls in bodily strength and weakness; but his battle must be heroic, for he too often has added to this, as he meets the fatigue of his pastoral and pulpit demands, that menacing foe to progress, the deficit want. There is horror in

this word deficit, and a hell at the end of it. It hisses and bites and stings. It reaves the minister of the glow in his study, and desolates the family-room of its brighter cheer. It introduces the ghouls of slaughter for the angels of comfort and innocent merriment, obtunds the keener sensibilities of a refined heart, and prostrates the noble intellect of the man of God like a mendicant upon a pallet of straw.

We will suppose the stewards to assess the minister's salary at five hundred dollars—the least he can live on, say. One-fifth of it is not paid. He is then short of a living one hundred dollars. The stewards say so; the minister knows it. There is no remedy, no other income. Deplorable sight! A minister of Jesus Christ quite in the jaws of hunger in a land of plenty. He gives himself wholly to the work, and for this reason cannot plow, trade, or keep an office. The mission, station, or circuit demands all his time. He cheerfully gives it in body, mind, and soul—is abundant in labors; for thereunto, as an itinerant minister, is he called. Or, if the salary be six hundred dollars, and falls

short one-sixth, then the charge has demanded and received the minister's services for twelve months and provided him and his family with bed and board for only ten months. So the minister must either go to Conference with a two months' debt on him or in the modern glory of a two months' fast. It might be immaterial in which case, if this burden was lodged with another man.

We have seen the noble-hearted Methodist minister alternately full of devotion and child-like playfulness, and that too not infrequently when the Conference-year was rounding out with most of his salary in the pockets of his parishioners. We have never been able to determine what effect a change in their relative positions would produce in their respective feelings. The introspective view would be a revelation at this point. But how can deficits best be remedied? We must take a business view of this question. The business of the Church should be done on those principles which will command the respect of business men. The stewards ought to be men of rare common sense. They may be men of sanguine temperaments, ought to

be enthusiastic, but never visionary. They must provide for their minister liberally if they can; and if, after they have done their best in those exceptional cases, and there be no missionary appropriation to help out, while we are not an advocate for a secularized ministry, yet in this condition of things the minister ought not to be less esteemed by his people and his brethren of the Conference if to supplement an inadequate salary he plow the field or teach a school.

Where the people of a charge have the acknowledged ability to support their pastor and do not, it is a blushing shame. When a minister gets in with such company an experience is the result. One need not look over a Conference of Methodist ministers long without finding a brother who has been there. And without a heavy strain on his imagination he might muse over the thought that he had struck that Michigan Avenue place of business, where, it is said, the pine-board sign attached to the wall has painted on it this unique announcement: "Lan-gwidges taught, Fortunes told, Seed pertaters."

The Church has minced matters on this subject till our cemeteries are fast becoming the station-house for an increasing number of our fallen heroes of the cross. Ministers in home and foreign fields—especially the home fields—are growing pale with want and the unceasing hard labor they are doing for the salvation of souls, while their bodies are finding premature graves over the fair land where Methodism has its millions of friends. We assert—and we believe no one will challenge the statement—that where the people have the ability, and assess the minister a competency and fail to pay, it is repudiation.

The term repudiation means to disown or reject a debt; so if after a people, in person or by their lawful representatives, have assumed a debt—an amount equal to the support of their pastor—and then, having the ability, fail to pay him in full, they surrender ignobly, to say the least of it; and that in a cause in which every devotee should, like John Huss, the emboldened hero of the cross, carry in him the stuff of which martyrs are made, and at the end of the race of

life be crowned, as he was, with the laurels of victory.

To provide for its officers, lubricate its machinery, keep up its charitable institutions, and carry on internal improvements, our Commonwealth—the State—levies an arbitrary tax *per capita* upon its citizens. Few persons would question the right of civilians to decide that the right of the principle of taxation lies in the fact of accrued benefit of government, affording protection to the person, life, and property of its subjects; and fewer still would question the justice of paying such tax when ordered to meet the demands of government economically administered, and not for the emolument of its officers. Are we to look for more liberal views and greater efficiency and order in even Christian civil government than in the militant Church of Jesus Christ? Shall the diplomat and the statesman, in the administration and systematic development of commonwealths, distance the minister and the steward, the last two of whom, in their respective spheres, preach the gospel of our Lord or adjunctively help by serving tables?

It ought to be a maxim that the member of the Church—the citizen of Zion—knows as much about his Church as he does about his county, State, nation, or kingdom.

The law of the Discipline, though not so arbitrary as the law of taxation by the State, provides for a voluntary *per capita* assessment of the members of the Methodist Church for the support of the ministry. Yes, it means that the stewards shall, in their lawful capacity, assess singly not the heads of families only, but the members in severalty—"each member." Surely the scriptural calls of the Church should not fall below the dignified demands of the State; and a man ought to be as loyal to his Church and his Lord as he is to the Commonwealth. The State taxes him; he is content to live in it. Sometimes the developments are about this: The State taxes and the subject grumbles and squirms, but pays it rather than give up his property and part from its blessings. The Church assesses for an infinitely worthy purpose. The member may murmur, and if he has been remiss in duty he may betray a capacious spirit, showing that had he divided

more liberally with the parsonage circle the luxury of his diet would not have enforced an unhappy union of his piety with dyspepsia; but he taunts his more credulous brother for paying out so much for preaching while he himself prefers to wait till God sends a drought to collect his proper revenues.

The problem for preventing a deficit may not be insoluble. The stewards must first know their people as to their ability to pay. Nothing can be done intelligently, orderly, and successfully till this knowledge is had. Then assess accordingly. The business way is to make the assessments equal to or a little in excess (allowing for contingencies) of the presiding elder's and pastor's salaries; and then let each steward collect from his listed members, severally, every dollar of the amounts annexed to their names. A legal assessment is made by the steward regularly elected by the Quarterly Conference of the same charge with the member whom he assesses; and when the member ratifies the assessment it partakes of the nature of a contract. With the exception of a few

cases, we have not heard of more than the moral enforcement of such claim.

Always bear in mind, however—though the statement seems simple—that where the assessments are equal to the salary or salaries, with a safe margin, and the sums are collected, there can be no deficiency; but where this is not done, the amount, minus the full assessment of salaries, is invariably the deficit. This is clear. Therefore, the remedy for this wasting plague of a deficit is to make the assessments equal to the salary, with a margin, and then collect the sum the salary calls for. Yes, but the question comes up, How can the stewards do this? The stewards themselves hold a key to the question of reaching the purse of the people. We think their safety is in the assessment plan and that ratified in detail or by each member assessed. Where skill, perseverance, and devotion to our Lord are found in the steward we do not think large deficits will appear among the members who have ratified their assessments. Never.

The presiding elder may be a potent agency in helping to cure this annual cry of

“deficit.” It cannot be too often said, or too earnestly enforced, that one of his chief duties is to take care of the ministers in the district over which he presides. Therefore, he must be a judicious business man, and never cease his efforts till all the stewards under his jurisdiction are elevated to the high standard of doing the Church's business on the acknowledged business principles of business men.

We would not venture upon so bold a statement, especially without strong facts; but we will say, with the place of the steward fully before us, that it is our belief that ten men in secular pursuits can support the eleventh as they live themselves. It has often been done even by a less number of men, and with a good collegiate education thrown in. To prove that we are not mistaken, if the reader will think over the changes that have been wrought in the community among his neighbors and acquaintances, not to say any thing about the records of eleemosynary institutions and those of county courts, he will confirm our statement. After her death, before the funeral

cortege could form into line or the tufts of sod be closed over the grave of the lost mother, each child left is provided with a home, which proves, through the years of childhood and mature life, to be a place of tenderness and refinement. No one thinks this task of love hard, and the child, by happy conditions, is reared, trained in the duties of the Bible, educated, and is the just pride of those of his adopted home. One man does this, and two and three likewise; and it is not known that either of them dies the poorer for it. A single Methodist minister, diffident and inexperienced, forced sometimes to endure humiliation for lack of a fixed plan of his officials, would not be more expensive in the home than an orphan. Take care of the orphan with a heart of love; take care of the minister with a heart full of the love of Jesus Christ. Argument is needless. If one man does so nobly for one who is not a minister, and three men do for three severally, why not ten men support the minister and his family as they themselves live? We are far from putting a burden on a fellow-being, and our zeal would

go no farther than the ability of the members to pay. That done, the minister must then cheerfully accept the result appreciatively and thankfully.

We will not argue the question of the Jewish tithe system. We think it is the law of the Christian Church now and for time to come. The Discipline has a plan about like it. It says, as quoted at another place: "Each member of the Church is expected to pay according to his or her several ability for the support of the ministry." This law cannot well be misunderstood. It is a part of the Methodism of the country. A tithe is a tenth—gross weight. As a business man, when a member of the Church knows his income—for this is the basis of calculation—he knows what tithes belong unto the Lord. And when the steward collects the tithes and pays his minister, he (the minister) is due the Lord a tithe of the tithes, or one-tenth of his gross receipts. The member should estimate his ability to pay out of what the Lord has given him—not more, not less—with the same impartial exactness and honesty that he would price produce

and chattels to his fellow-man on the market. He may complain that he cannot pay forty dollars to the support of the ministry and feed his family, but he loses a horse worth eighty dollars and lives. The minister often loses as much or more out of what the stewards said was only a living. When pleasure and luxury foist their temptations it would be sound policy to calculate their price, when Christian obligations have already made out their account. Repudiation should not be known in the Church of Jesus Christ. The beautiful thought of Montgomery, "Distinct as the billows, yet one as the sea," will unite the member's pocket-book with his religion. There are questions to be looked at, and we need not be squeamish about them, for of necessity they recur to us every day.

The steward feels himself compelled to assess his pastor's salary at figures as close as he can live. How does he come out collecting? The year rolls by when only one-half or two-thirds of the amount is collected, when the whole amount, if collected, would barely be equal to his minister's economical necessities, not to say any thing about doc-

tors' bills and general wear and tear. We make honorable mention, though, that physicians—who, in their noble profession of the healing art, stand in close relations to the work of the ministry—oftentimes gratuitously bestow their skill upon those who are engaged in the regular pastoral work. But when covetousness makes headway, and those cormorants of Satan, the avaricious and usurious money-lenders, multiply in the Church and among the people, and depression, drought, or calamity comes, retrenchment is sure to begin at the house of God. The minister's salary, the general collections, church and parsonage building, with other interests, even to the Church paper, are all stranded or made to suffer here. The steward can make up many small deficits by thoughtfully taking to the parsonage corn, flour, meat, lard, and other supplies, and not less money; and by seeking out the members on a good pair of legs or on horseback he may acquire greater efficiency by the knowledge of the fact that not all of them will think to call upon him and pay. No; not on that fatal day before Quarterly Conference meets.

It would look like fiction for some people to read the Old and New Testament, and recount the judgments of God sent on his chosen children who were at ease in Zion, together with the parsimonious and disobedient, and learn of wasted fields, murrain cattle, chilblains, and the like; and read in Leviticus, chapter twenty-six, the death-roll of the Church, which says: "I also will do this unto you: I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it." Afflictions may be the result of a violation of the laws of nature, and suffering or death follow; the loss of home or estate may come by bad management or hazardous ventures; but for a people to reason God out of the minutest affairs of this life is to set aside the bed-rock principle of the constitution of Heaven. When afflictions, depressed stocks, broken banks, and a general upheaval of personal comfort comes, no theory of interpretation is safe which leaves God out.

The steward has weighty things for the

member to consider. If life be a reality, and God reigns, and the Bible be not a fable, that utterance of our Lord which says, "With the same measure ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again," will be applied to the member, the steward, and the minister at the last day with regard to the use made of the possessions of this life, as well as to the outlay of labor for humanity and the Church for the life to come. Few people will leave untasted life's dark, bitter streams, and fewer still will have grown so invulnerable and spotless a manhood or womanhood as to merit, when they are gone, the encomiastic memorial of Fitz-Greene Halleck when he says:

None knew thee but to love thee,
None named thee but to praise.

'They are not educated,' is the standing apology for the ministry not receiving a support. Alas! alas! "Not educated." We fear that whatever scope of meaning may be attached to the statement it is true of a large per cent. of Methodists in paying both in the cities and rural districts. Methodism has its heroes, and let us hope that

some of the sons of Gyges still live to thunder forth the law and shake the mountains of sin. Dark will be the day, and blighting the curse, if Methodism shall ever put off, as there is an inkling to do in some places, the giant robustness of the fathers for the gossamers of that weakling of the impetuous effeminacy of the Jezebel of tinsel and æstheticism. The steward must be a hero, and the member no weak imitator. Methodism is unalloyed manliness. When the Discipline is used by the ministers in "all things for which it is prescribed," they will find themselves on safe ground and in confidential relations to the officials of their charges. Such should be their attitude. The officials may also put themselves in similar relations of sympathy and interest to the entire membership. Not one should be left out. We are on the second century of American Methodism, and still we are told that "we do not support the gospel," and that "we are not educated." We would not disturb the sacred dust of the illustrious dead, nor pluck honor from the brow of the battle-scarred hosts of the Methodists now

living; but we humbly submit that the Christian men and women of this generation have no right to visit their sins of omission or commission on coming generations. In plain, the Methodism of to-day must educate its own elements of influx so as to do its present work and hand down to the next generation regulars, and not raw militia. The functions of the minister and steward are those of the teacher—each in his respective sphere. The members, in the sense of the term we here employ it, are the pupils. The minister is principal. The board of stewards is his corps of teachers. We use this figure in a good sense, and with restriction, for there are many ministers and stewards who, like Saul at the feet of Gamaliel, would gladly sit at the feet of wiser members and learn. They do so daily; but the fact is what we are after. It is not a psychological law that man is educated by process of natural generation. The natural birth simply confers the conditions of development, physically and mentally; the spiritual birth no acquisition of knowledge whatever, except experience. The law of repro-

duction, as is maintained by Sir William Hamilton, is remote from certain mental conditions. So to educate in any thing is to lay the mind on the anvil of to-day and draw out its powers. This applies to mind universally and in every degree.

The reader shall decide for himself whether the minister and steward have met the duties imposed upon them, by the following: We will suppose the case of a teacher of a secular school, with a corps of assistants, to be employed and put in charge of a college with one hundred students, and at the close of a ten months' session the report is made that the pupils had made "no advancement" in their studies. With the importance of the measure, how long, think you, would such teachers remain? The pupils were not all the subjects of the dunce-block. They have capacities, but where is the development? We think there is not a shade of difference between this startling result in the college and that of the work of a pastor and his stewards for a twelvemonth in a Methodist station or circuit, when the old, stereotyped utterance is periodically made of

the members that "they are not educated." Why? Their teachers were installed, the text-book—God's word—was before them, the scholars were on hand; but at the end of the year "no progress" is reported. Who is to blame? and when will the world be brought to Christ at this rate? Think it out. The minister, who is entitled to a support, cannot do his work in good spirit to the utmost of his ability without leaving a blessing upon his people; and the people should not unman themselves, and become willing to live on the charity of the gospel. Think of a report coming up from the minister, at the end of four years, that the "people are not educated!" Think of the college school-master coming up at the end of four years and reporting "no progress!" And to think of a whole century of training and report "not educated" is shocking. It does not take a wise man to foresee that such pedagogy as this would end at the plow-handles. The reader is left to run out the parallel lines. "Not educated," in Methodist nomenclature, has come to mean no pay.

Daniel Webster said, "The most impor-

tant thought I ever had was my personal responsibility to God." The thought, when laid at the bar of human consciousness, is oppressive; but when duties are met, and God smiles pardon, and the angels sing merrily over the redeemed culprit, then it is that the laughing waters of paradise wash the sands of attrition from the soul, and light it into the strength and hope of the Christ-land.

The Bible is true or false, right or wrong. Does the reader believe the whole of it? Men read and praise the smooth, sweet writings of Tibullus, the prince of elegiac poets; others, with caustic hatred, walk in the bloody trail of Porphyry, bearing fagots to burn the very roots of Christianity; but the Bible, with its sweets and its bitters, with its hopes and its fears, its heaven and its hell, still holds out in Mercy's own hand the challenge made eighteen hundred years ago: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The steward and member shall have for meditation three classes of texts containing promises. The

first is purely temporal. It promises him who will honor God with his substance—the first-fruits, the best—that his barns shall be filled with plenty. The Proverbs tell us: “Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty.” In the next, he who helps the poor is said to lend to the Lord, and he (the Lord) then becomes debtor, and pledges that he will repay the sum himself; for, “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.” Be not afraid, kind reader, if you pay to the collection—the security is good. The last promise, of which there are many in the book of God, blends spiritual blessings with temporal security and prosperity. As the world stood in the fading shadows of the types and symbols of the old dispensation, when the treasury of the Lord needed replenishing and the larders of the ministry were low—for God ever keeps a watchful eye upon the treasury of his Church and the temporal welfare of his ministry—he saw the spiritual poverty of the Church was

increased by a decreased ratio of gifts to his cause, and in this hour of need and of dearth commissioned Malachi to tell the people: "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

To reason with a man further than in the three texts quoted to procure, with his own proper exertions added, a fullness of all reasonable bodily comforts and spiritual blessings, seems but folly. The texts promise, on conditions named in them, first, as to home, plenty; secondly, to give to the poor the Lord becomes paymaster, possibly in kind; thirdly, to pay tithes is to bring a double blessing. The soul shall not have room to receive it, while the devourer of the field is stayed. There is this caution, however: there

is no promise in the Holy Scriptures that a man shall become rich by paying large or small amounts of money to the Lord, so far as the things of this life are concerned. Wealth has its own conditions; but the Christian man, having left off all excesses of appetite and passion, which lay large tribute upon the sensualities of the worldling, and rendering to God cheerful service in soul and estate, puts himself on the side of the special promises of God, and presumably on the road to prosperity and success. With this view the Lord's promises are supreme, and he who cannot accept them is dead to entreaty, and from such masterly inactivity would quietly look on and let the devil serve a writ of replevin on his earthly goods and hope of heaven.

We have not thought it worth the space to speak of that class of people who are pretentiously pious, and though able to assist yet never do any thing so well as when they warm up on the misdoings of their brethren and the short-comings of their minister. They may charge that the minister is "preaching for money." Ay! the world

has had one Judas Iscariot in the past eighteen hundred years—just one; but if those accusers could get a license to preach and travel a Methodist mission one year and receive one dollar and fifty cents for it, as some ministers have done (so we are informed), or realize even the average salary of a Methodist minister, the coming Conference would enter upon its minutes A, B, and C as “located at their own request,” or possibly report them as having gone on a nautical excursion with Jonah’s whale to avoid the worry of ministerial “orders.” “Preaching for money” is a wild infatuation, as devoid of sober truth as a Mother Hubbard is innocent of the artistic cut when compared with an evening Princess dress. This class is celebrated as big-meeting folks. Their fitful lives suggest sympathy; their captious spirit pity. Once in their presence the paraphrased stanza given below would make the reader cogitate as it rolls from their sonorous lips:

Religion’s all of life to me,
It’s all my soul’s desire;
It makes my heart, my spirit free,
And it keeps my preacher’s hire.

The question is not so much, Are we going to heaven? but, How are we getting along on earth? We are far from adopting assertion for argument, or supplanting logic with sophistry; but we do not feel we are taking any risk when we say that a tithe of our gross income belongs to the Lord. This, we think, is the minimum that can be paid with safety. If the Lord were to deal with some people in spiritual blessing as they dole out their mites to him, spiritual bankruptcy would soon be their lot. Man—no matter what his legal possessions in lands, bonds, or money, and though he have added the polish of a Chesterfield, or the diplomacy of a Pericles, or the strength of a throne, sporting a crown—after all, is nothing but Jehovah's tenant. Absolute possession is with God. The steward and member will understand us. They are business men. A friend says to the member: "Take my farm, stock, seeds, and irrigating canals—every thing about the farm to seed, water, and work it." He accepts. "Now, what is the price?" he asks. "One-tenth gross," comes the reply. Do you know of any other tenant who is doing so well? any more such

landlordism in the country? Take time to answer. This is what the Lord is doing for every farmer, and the equal for every other man who lives on the face of the earth. What tenant would complain—when land, seeds, stock, and rain are given in abundance—at paying a tenth to his landlord? Such a landlord would be lauded to the skies, and canonized by his fellows as a saint. But the Lord, bestowing the conditions of prosperity of which man avails himself, gives him the piece of land, the seed to sow, and the implements to work it, together with the rain and the sunshine. Does he pay the Lord and Giver of harvests as graciously as he pays his fellow-man? The judgment will determine; and in this near approach to the Judge of all the earth, we leave the reader.

To learn Mr. Wesley's rule is to be industrious, liberal, frugal, and charitable. A summation of the precision and force of this question in its breadth and bearings is well put by him when he says: "Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can."

If any one thinks the principles herein advanced oppressive, the author is a teach-

ble spirit, and would fain escape condemnation before the Lord now and hereafter in the things of which he has written, but is serious and honest enough to try to learn the scriptural standard of duty, though it be from such texts as that wonderful passage in Exodus, where the women made the laver out of their mirrors for the Lord's house. Sacrifice and self-denial accompany the religion of Jesus Christ, and to pay him one-tenth, when he is the rightful owner of it all, scarcely rises to the dignity of either. We do not write to make Methodist ministers rich—we have more common sense than that; nor to relieve them of one duty they owe the people or the Church. We have humbly in view the aim to help and not hinder the conquests of the kingdom of our Lord by a plain statement of duty; and we do appeal to the steward and member, by all the ties which bind minister and people heart to heart and soul to soul in a common destiny, to see to it, ere they sleep, that their minister has in pantry and wardrobe sufficient supplies for a good living and bodily comforts week by week the year round while

he labors among them. We have seen two Methodist ministers in our brief history who bore the death-marks of wasting anxiety and dejection. They were good men. One was young, the other in matured life. They sent squadrons of souls to recruit the armies of the skies. Both are now gone to join them. When the heavenly gates stood ajar as they ascended, a tearless ransomed host of spirits made perfect waited to receive them with songs which gladdened the eternal hills; and we believe the parsimony of the charges they served contributed to cast up the monumental pile which now heaves over their manly bosoms. Tears of regret, no matter how bitter, are too late now to recall them. Let us do better.

As we stood on Abraham's Heights—amid antique relics, half filled with wonder and half with admiration—while leaning against the iron inclosure of his monument, on which spot deadly armies met in bloody combat, we read from the face of the marble shaft that lifts its shapely form, surmounted with his helmet and sword and the national coat-of-arms, over his grave, these immortal last

words of General Wolfe, spoken upon his aid-de-camp reporting to him the enemy as fleeing and conquered: "Then I die victorious!" Memorable words these, because they tell of vanquished foes and victory won. We could not repress the thought that on the Christian's high battleground, as minister or member, when bleeding and dying in the last conflict, our triumph over spiritual foes shall be as signal as was Wolfe's. "I die victorious," with the Christian, is the triumphant battle-shout to which the blood-washed millions of the skies respond with a loud "Amen."

The support of the Methodist ministry, though not the worst among the Churches of the land, is painfully meager. Enough so to afflict with more than ordinary anxiety about eighty per cent. of them.

We have defined the qualifications and office of the steward, recited disciplinary duties, quoted the word of God upon the question of the duty of all men to support the gospel, and especially, under their vows, the Methodists; and we now propose to leave the matter to the arbitrament of the enlightened

Christian conscience, and adjourn to the final judgment.

Much of the so-called Christian work done is mere child's play. A crumb now and then is the spiritual diet of many, while faith with others is without sinew—a sort of rope of sand, which neither binds on to God nor excites the enmity of the devil. With commanding faith in our Lord, man becomes supreme—a little less than a divinity itself—and the noblest thought of all is that if he will forget self in his service to others Tennyson's dream in "Locksley Hall" will be sweetly realized:

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords
with might;

Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music
out of sight.

This volume is not all a stale theory; but if the work be done which we have tried to map out, we shall take comfort in the fact that our brother ministers will be more comfortably provided for in the future than some others have been in the past who were less fortunate than they. Plain things have been written. Yes; but in love. Feeble things

have been penned. Yes; but with the burdens of labor in the pulpit and pastorate upon them, we hope never to see another heart-broken, spirit-crushed Methodist minister, or minister of any other Christian Church; and we invoke all the epithets due the infirm or the parvenu, if in receiving them cosmos shall never again exhibit another pastoral charge whose minister, with moneyless purse and pale, unnourished face, if not unfed, yet is dying daily with consuming cares—a scene sufficient to make every angel of God revolt against the earth, and under imperial orders bar and bolt all the pathways to the realms of supernal day.

We allow no one to outrival us in the honor we cherish for and the love we bear to the Methodist ministers, stewards, and members. In the society of an unselfish minister of Jesus Christ there is a charm as precious as the current of the heavenly winds that sweep over Mount Zion, the city of the King of saints. This is true of all lovers of Jesus of what name soever. If any thing has been said in this volume which will bless and help the ministers, the stewards, the

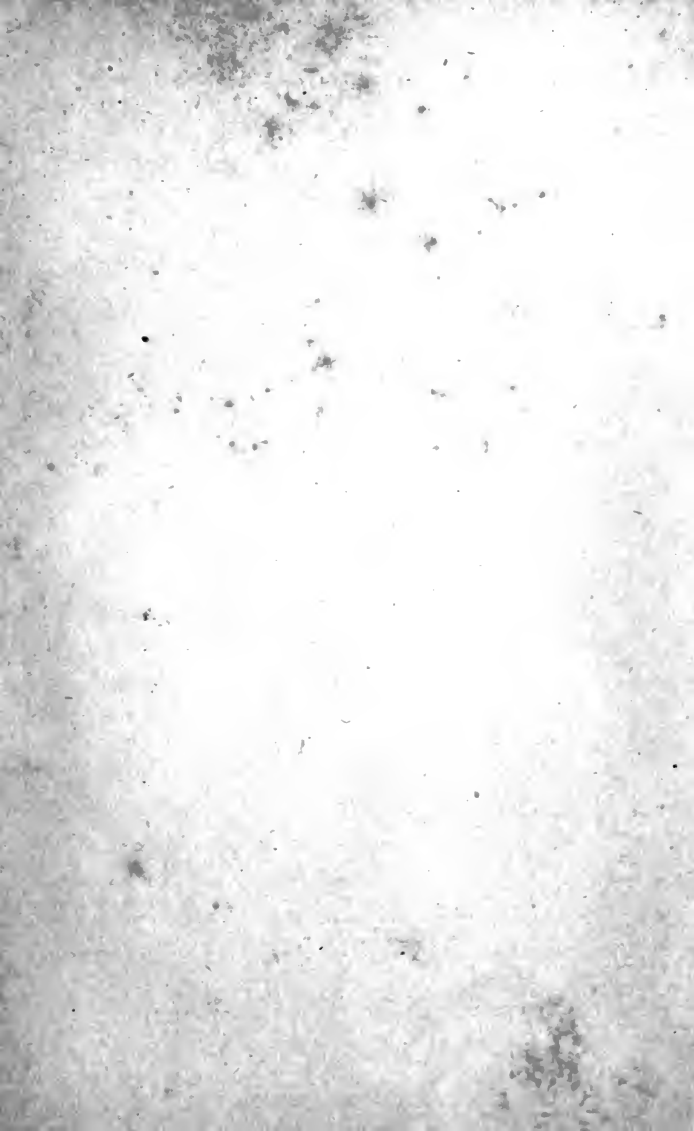
members, or the people, to the Prince of Life be all the glory; and if the steward and member shall comfortably support their pastor in the place in which he lives, the object of this volume will have been gained; and nothing more is asked. Then, as time moves on and the yearly mile-stone is reached, with duty done and hope painting its gorgeous light about the Great White Throne, we can trustfully look up and repeat with sorrowful Phœbe Cary:

One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er:
I am nearer home to-day
Than I ever was before.

THE END.









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